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The Borzoi Plays III

"MORAL"

A comedy in three acts translated by Charles Recht from the German of

Ludwig Thoma

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"Moral"

THE BORZOI PLAYS

I WAR
By Michael Artzibashef

II MOLOCH
By Beulah Marie Dix

III "MORAL"
By Ludwig Thoma

IV THE INSPECTOR-GENERAL
By Nicolay V. Gogol

The Borzoi Plays III

"MORAL"

A comedy in three acts translated by Charles Recht from the German of

Ludwig Thoma

New York · Alfred A Knopf · 1916

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INTRODUCTION

Dr. Ludwig Thoma, perhaps better known to his Bavarian countrymen as Peter Schlemiehl, was born in Oberammergau on January 21, 1867. After graduating from a gymnasium in Munich, he studied at the School of Forestry at Aschauffenburg. He did not finish his course there, but entered the University at Munich and received his degree as Doctor Juris in 1893.

A year later Dr. Thoma began to practice law; but he abandoned that pursuit in 1899 to follow a career for which his inclinations and talents so happily fitted him.

He had been writing humorous verses for *Simplicissimus* for several years under the pen name of Peter Schlemiehl, with such success that the paper almost became identified by that name. These poems were later published in book form under the title — *Grobheiten.*

His prose writings in Bavarian dialect as well as his boyhood experiences entitled, *Lausbubengeschichten,* won a large and warm audience. In 1899 he became the editor of *Simplicissimus.* From then on his renown grew. The foremost critics of German letters began to take notice of this " Bavarian Aristophanes " and to compare him to Heine and the classics.

When *Moral* and *Lottchen's Birthday* appeared, while the reviewers shook their heads and stated that Dr. Thoma was *shocking* (so in original) they concluded that their author was " casting a long shadow." To-day Dr. Thoma is a recognized figure in Germany. Prof. Robert F. Arnold in " Das Moderne Drama " (Strassburg, 1908) ranks him next to Hauptmann.

His writings are numerous. A vein, satirical and humorous, with a conception of the pathetic, makes him more than an equal to Mark Twain. In addition he is possessed of a message, which he delivers in the *Moral.*

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Introduction

First produced in 1908 the play soon became a part and parcel of the repertoire of the leading theatres in Germany. It was put on for the first time in New York, in German, at the Irving Place Theatre in the spring of 1914, through the efforts of the late Heinrich Matthias and the writer. Mr. Matthias then played the part of Beermann. Mr. Christians, the director, repeated the performance a number of times that season, each performance meeting with a warm response.

The late Percival Pollard was the first American critic to emphasize the importance of Dr. Thoma's work in his excellent resumé of contemporary German literature: *Masks and Minstrels of Modern Germany.* He pointed out " that no country where hypocrisy or puritanism prevail as factors in the social and municipal conduct should be spared the corrective acid of this play."

H. L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan for many years have sung praises of the *Moral* in the *Smart Set.* But its production on the English speaking stage still remains an event eagerly to be awaited. Briefly, the play is a polemic against the " men higher up," churchmen, reformers, and social hypocrites.

The translation follows the text implicitly. Four different versions were made all varying in a degree from the original, and although Dr. Thoma wrote to the writer " bin auch damit einverstanden dass Sie in der Ubersetzung meines Schauspieles ' Moral ' etwaige Aenderungen oder Adaptiereungen, die durch die englisch-amerikanischen Verhältnisse und den Geschmack des amerikanischen Theatrepublikums geboten erscheinen, in entsprechender Weise vornehmen . . ." it was deemed best for purposes of publication to try to preserve the original atmosphere without an attempt to even transpose such phrases as Gnädige Frau, or Herr Kommerzienrat.

CHARLES RECHT.

New York, October, 1916.

"MORAL"

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

Fritz Beermann, a wealthy landowner and banker.
Lena Beermann, his wife.
Effie Beermann, their daughter.
Kommerzienrat Adolph Bolland, capitalist and manufacturer
Clara Bolland, his wife.
Dr. Hauser, an ex-judge.
Frau Lund, an old lady.
Hans Jacob Dobler, a poet.
Fraulein Koch-Pinneberg, an artiste.
Privatdozent Dr. Wasner, a gymnasium professor.
Freiherr Von Simbach, the Police Commissioner of the Duchy.
Assessor Oscar Stroebel, a police official.
Madame Ninon De Hauteville, a lady of leisure.
Freiherr General Botho von Schmettau, also known as Zurnberg. A Gentleman-in-waiting and Adjutant to His Highness, the Duke.
Joseph Reisacher, a clerk of the Police Department.
Betty, a maid at Beersmann's.
Two man-servants and a policeman.

THE PRESUMPTION

The esteemed, sensitive public will assume that the action takes place in Emilsburg, the capital of the Duchy of Gerlestein. The first and third acts occur in the house of Herr Fritz Beermann; the second act, in the Police Headquarters. It all happens between Sunday afternoon and Monday evening.

To be free from blame, the producers will please note that:

BEERMANN is in the fifties; jovial; lively; with gray side-whiskers and chin carefully shaved.

FRAU BEERMANN is in the late forties, though youthful looking for her age.

FRAU LUND sixty-eight; a woman of impressive appearance; her manner is energetic; her mass of white hair is carefully coiffured.

FRAU BOLLAND about forty-five; stout; talkative.

DR. WASNER a tall German professor with full blond beard; deep voiced; wears pinc-nez with black tortoise shell rim and broad black cord.

HANS JACOB DOBLER is a poet; he is dressed in a poor fitting cut-away coat; unkempt mustache and Van Dyke beard.

FRAULEIN PINNEBERG, a feminist, wears a loose fitting gown.

DR. HAUSER fifty; smooth shaven; wears gold rimmed spectacles.

VON SCHMETTAU, sixty; remains stately looking with effort; military bearing.

MADAME DE HAUTEVILLE — indefinitely twenty; her ultra-fashionable Parisian gowns invite the cloak and suit patrons.

"MORAL"

ACT I

FURTHER APOLOGY

Card room in Beermann's house. In the background a swinging door opens into the dining room. To the right a smaller door leads to the music room. On the left side another door opens into the entrance hall. To left upstage in a corner a small card table with chairs. To right upstage a large sofa and comfortable chairs. Parallel to background down stage, tea table with coffee service thereon; near it to right, smaller table, on it a humidor.

A butler is engaged at the tea table, another man servant is holding swinging door open. [*Business of getting up from table.*] *Many voices and rattle of chairs are heard from dining room. Through swinging doors enters Bolland and Frau Beermann, Beermann with Frau Bolland, Dr. Hauser with Effie, Dr. Wasner with Fraulein Koch-Pinneberg, Dobler alone.*

General greeting of "Mahlzeit."

Dr. Wasner is vigorously shaking hands — going to Frau Beermann says, "Ich wünsche Gesegnete Mahlzeit."

The servants pass around coffee — Beermann conversing with Bolland comes down stage . . .

BOLLAND. You will receive two thousand votes more than the Socialists. That's certain.

BEERMANN [*skeptical*]. No,— no.

BOLLAND. If all the Liberals combine with the Conservatives, the result cannot be in doubt.

BEERMANN [*taking coffee from the servant*]. If . . .

BOLLAND. Fusion is here. It's the logical development. I am an old politician. The time for discussion is over. Now it's a straight fight to a finish.

DR. WASNER [*coming nearer*]. The German fatherland is rallying to the support of the national flag.

BEERMANN. But there are controversies everywhere. I know best. I always am told by campaign managers: don't say this and don't say that.

BOLLAND. In what way?

BEERMANN. For instance, I'm to speak at the Liberal Club the day after to-morrow. You would not expect me to say the same things I told the Conservatives last night . . . ?

BOLLAND. Your details, of course, must differ. But fundamentally it amounts to the same thing.

BEERMANN. The same thing? Believe me, all this masking confuses me. [*Drinks.*]

EFFIE [*calling across the tea table where she has been standing with others*]. Papa! Listen to Frau Bolland. She also says that the Indian Dancer is so interesting.

FRAU BOLLAND. Positively won—derful, Herr Bolland! You can conceive the entire spirit of the Orient.

EFFIE. Why haven't we gone to see her?

FRAU BOLLAND. You surely ought to go. Professor Stohr — you know him — told me he never in his life saw anything so gorgeous.

FRAULEIN KOCH-PINNEBERG. She's so picturesque in her greenish gowns.

FRAU BOLLAND. I did not know that the Hindoos could be so charming.

BEERMANN. We'll have a look at her some night.

EFFIE. But to-morrow night is her last appearance.

BEERMANN [*going to the humidor*]. Very well darling. Will you remind me of it to-morrow? [*Taking a box of cigars offers one to Dobler who is standing near him.*] Smoke?

DOBLER [*taking one*]. Thanks. But I am not accustomed to the imported ones.

BEERMANN [*patronizingly*]. You'll get used to high living soon enough.

BOLLAND [*to Dobler*]. How long have you been in the city now?

DOBLER. Two years.

BOLLAND. And before that you were in . . . eh?

FRAU BOLLAND. You must excuse him Herr Dobler. Why in Unterschlettenbach, dear. . . . You know that!

BOLLAND [*correcting himself*]. Certainly. Bit of literary history. Mighty interesting place that Unterschlettenbach . . . eh?

DOBLER. Hardly, Herr Kommerzienrat. Poor and unsanitary. Most of its inhabitants are miners.

BOLLAND. Fancy that! And I never knew it. Full of miners! Tell me though, what do you think of our set here . . . ? How do you like this well-to-do circle . . . the big city . . . wealthy surroundings?

DOBLER [*lighting a cigar*]. I like it well enough. But I think I will always feel out of place here.

BOLLAND. Can't get used to it?

DOBLER. Everything is so different. It seems to me at times as though I had suddenly entered a beautiful house while outdoors my old comrade was awaiting me patiently — the open road.

FRAU BOLLAND. Isn't that won—derful? So very re-a-lis-tic-ally put! I can just picture it. Oh Herr Dobler . . . I must tell you: your novel — my husband and I talk about it all day long.

BOLLAND. Tell me though — did you yourself experience the life of that young man you describe?

DOBLER. It's the story of my youth.

BOLLAND. But it's somewhat colored by poetic imagination?

DOBLER. N——o.

BOLLAND. For instance, you have never actually starved?

DOBLER. Oh, yes. There's no imagination in that.

BOLLAND. Just the way you describe it — so that everything turned red?

DOBLER. Everything had a pink color. On one occasion I did not eat anything for four and one-half days.

FRAU BEERMANN [*compassionately*]. You poor thing!

FRAU BOLLAND. That's exceedingly interesting!

BOLLAND. Do tell us all about it! Then you saw dancing fires?

DOBLER. Yes. Everything danced before my eyes, and I saw it all through a hazy veil, and towards the end my hearing was affected.

BOLLAND. You don't say so? Your hearing also?

DOBLER. When any one spoke to me it sounded as if he stood a great distance off — a great distance.

FRAU BOLLAND. Our set never dreams of such things.

BEERMANN. How did it all turn out?

DOBLER. What do you mean?

BEERMANN. Well, in the end you got something to eat again?

DOBLER. Finally I fainted; I was found lying in a meadow, and was taken to the hospital.

FRAU BEERMANN [*sighing*]. Are such things still possible in our day?

FRAU BOLLAND. What can you expect — of these idealists!

DR. HAUSER. They deserve nothing better.

BEERMANN. And after you were in the hospital — how did you get out?

DOBLER. As soon as I got stronger. Later on I became a printer — found a position — studied and published my book.

BEERMANN. That's all in your novel, I know. But the part where you describe how you were a tramp — that's not true?

DOBLER. Yes, I "hoboed" almost a whole year.

FRAU BOLLAND. "Hoboed!" Fancy that! How unique!

FRAULEIN KOCH-PINNEBERG. I can just picture it. Tramping along the railroad tracks.

DOBLER. Yes. You folks think you can picture it with four square meals a day. But it's quite different, I assure you. There were three of us at that time. We worked our way from Basel upwards — sometimes on the left — sometimes on the right bank of the Rhine. In Worms we spent the last of our money and we had to *peddle* for *hand-outs*.

FRAU BOLLAND [*not understanding him*]. "Hand-outs?" What is that?

DOBLER [*with pathos*]. To beg for something to eat, gnädige Frau, for our daily bread.

[*They all remain silent. Only the voice of the butler who is serving liqueur can be heard.*] "Cognac monsieur! Chartreuse! Champagne?"

BEERMANN [*taking a glass*]. To a man of refinement, such an existence must have been quite unbearable.

DOBLER [*taking a glass of cognac from the butler*]. Unpleasant. [*Drinking.*] But you lose your sensitiveness. At first it is hard — but one learns. In one hot day on the road . . . when you get fagged out — and with every stone hurting your feet — you'll learn. The dust blinds you — but you've got to go on just the same. In the evening you come to a small hamlet with smoke curling above the house-tops and the houses themselves look cozy — then you have to hold your hat in your hand

and beg for a plate of warm soup. [*A short pause.*]

DR. WASNER [*deep bass voice*]. Home sweet home!

BOLLAND. The story reminds me exactly of my late father.

FRAU BOLLAND. But, Adolph!

BOLLAND. Indeed, I say it does!

FRAU BOLLAND. How can you draw such a comparison? Herr Dobler has become a celebrated poet.

BOLLAND. My father also achieved something in life. At his funeral four hundred employees followed the coffin.

FRAU BOLLAND [*impatiently*]. We've heard that before. . . . Herr Dobler, did you write poetry in those days?

DOBLER. No, Frau Bolland. Much later.

FRAU BOLLAND. I'll have to read your novel all over again, now that I know it is all autobiographical.

FRAU BEERMANN [*to Dr. Wasner*]. You were going to sing, Herr Professor?

DR. WASNER. I promised. . . .

FRAU BEERMANN. Yes, do, Effie will accompany you.

DR. WASNER. If Fraulein will be so kind . . . but I don't know how my voice is to-day. . . .

FRAU BOLLAND. You sing so beauti—ful—ly.

DR. WASNER. So much campaign work. Politics corrupts even the voice.

FRAULEIN KOCH-PINNEBERG. Do oblige us.

[*Frau Bolland, Frau Beermann, Dr. Wasner, Fräulein Koch, Effie go out into the music room.*]

BEERMANN. It's a pity that the professor is going to sing. We could have started a game of skat. Have some more cognac?

DR. HAUSER. No, thanks.

DOBLER. Thanks. No more for me.

[*Bolland seats himself on sofa; Dr. Hauser and Dobler sit in chairs; Beermann lights a fresh cigar. The butler goes into the music room and as he opens the door, the sound of the piano is heard.*]

BOLLAND. As I said before Herr Dobler, your story reminded me very much of my late father.

DR. HAUSER. Of the well known Kommerzienrat Bolland?

BOLLAND [*sinks deep into chair; crosses legs*]. Never mind he was not always a wealthy Kommerzienrat. [*Turning to Dobler.*] Picture to yourself a winter landscape — it's bitter cold — a gray sky — it is snowing and everything is wrapped in snow. Through all this we see a youth walking — rather staggering — along the forest road from Perleberg. A half starved young man. [*He pauses and brushes ashes from his cigar. The butler enters from the music room to get a glass of water; then he goes out again. While the door is open, the trembling bass baritone voice of Prof. Wasner is heard.*]

"In deinen Augen hab ich einst gelesen
Von Lieb' und — Glück — von Lieb'
und Gluck den Schein. . . ." *

[*The door closes and the sound is shut off.*]

BOLLAND [*now continues his speech*]. And now the snow falls faster and faster. This poor young man had *par tout* nothing to eat since the morning. He becomes very weak; sits down on a bundle of twigs and falls asleep. Just by sheer chance it happens that a man from Perleberg passing by sees this dejected, snowed-in

* (Translated): — "In thy dear eyes I once read the story
Of love and Joy — of Love,
And Joy agleam. . . ."

figure and takes the young fellow home with him. [*He pauses.*] And this young man later became my father. . . .

HAUSER. And Herr Kommerzienrat Bolland.

BOLLAND. Yes. Herr Kommerzienrat Bolland. [*To Dobler.*] Now don't you consider it quite remarkable? Wouldn't that make a fine novel?

DOBLER. Yes. . . . Yes.

BOLLAND. That could be worked up very nicely, couldn't it? A poor young man — the snow covered landscape. . . .

HAUSER. And that bundle of twigs.

DOBLER. Fortune has her unique whims and likes to turn the tables.

BOLLAND. That's it exactly. Fortune delights in turning the tables.

HAUSER. Unique whims? No. That sort of thing happens every day.

BOLLAND. What happens every day?

HAUSER. The story of a poor young man who becomes a millionaire. Every large factory boasts of a like progenitor.

BOLLAND. Do you think so?

HAUSER. And the poor young man grows poorer with each telling. Your son, Herr Bolland, in his description will have his grandfather freeze to death on the bundle of twigs.

BOLLAND. Upon my word the story is gospel. [*To Dobler.*] I'd make use of that plot. . . . How he founded his business and how it grew and grew. . . .

[*As Frau Beermann enters from the music room, the tremulous voice of Prof. Wasner is heard.*]

"Behüt dich Gott, es hat nicht sollen sein." *

*God guard thee well, it was but a dream.

[*The closing of the door shuts off the sound.*]

DOBLER. In one respect you are right. The character of the *self made man* * has hardly been treated in contemporary German literature.

BOLLAND [*with enthusiasm*]. That's just what I claim. Always about the poor people only. But take a man who has a large income — one who makes a success of his business, that also is poetry.

HAUSER. I'd have my ledger novelized, if I were you, Bolland. [*A maid opens door, admitting Frau Lund.*]

FRAU BEERMANN [*welcoming Frau Lund*]. Mama Lund, how good of you.

FRAU LUND [*vivaciously*]. Always glad to come here. Good afternoon, gentlemen. Where is my little Effie?

FRAU BEERMANN. In the music room. [*To the maid.*] Please tell my daughter. . . .

FRAU LUND. No, no, don't disturb her.

BEERMANN. Permit me. [*Introducing.*] . . . Herr Hans Jacob Dobler, our famous poet. . . .

FRAU LUND [*taking his hand*]. A famous poet? Delighted.

BOLLAND. Author of "Life Story of Hans.". . .

FRAU LUND [*pleasantly to Dobler*]. If I were younger, Herr Dobler, I would certainly make believe that I read your book. But at my age I find that sort of thing too tiresome. What is the "Life Story of Hans"?

DOBLER. It is a novel, gnädige Frau.

BOLLAND. A masterpiece.

FRAU LUND. Then my ignorance is unpardonable. I'll soon make reparation.

[*Frau Bolland followed by Effie, Dr. Wasner and Fraulein Koch hurry out of the music room.*]

* So in original.

FRAU BOLLAND. I am off for the Arts Club. I'll be late, I fear. [*To Frau Lund.*] Oh, how do you do, Frau Lund?

EFFIE [*hurries over to Frau Lund and kisses her hand*]. Mama Lund!

FRAU LUND. How is my little mischief maker? When are you coming to see me?

EFFIE. I would glady come . . . but, I am so busy with music lessons and Professor Stohr's lectures. . . .

FRAU LUND. And this and that and your eighteen years. You are quite right, my dear.

FRAU BOLLAND [*to Frau Beermann*]. May Effie come along? They say there are very won-der-ful paintings at the Arts Club.

FRAU BEERMANN [*turning to Frau Lund*]. I don't know if . . .

FRAU LUND. Of course, let her go along. She has such a pretty little dress. Why should she be here with us old people? The gentlemen will entertain us. . . .

FRAU BOLLAND. But then we'll have to hurry. It is quite late. Good-bye, Frau Beermann. I enjoyed myself so much. Good-bye, my dear Frau Lund. So glad to have seen you again. Good-bye, good-bye . . . Adolph!

BOLLAND. Yes, Mother.

FRAU BOLLAND. You won't forget the theatre tonight? At eight. The Viennese actor is so fine. [*Off to left. Followed by Effie and Fräulein Koch. Frau Bolland in the doorway.*]

FRAU BOLLAND. Will you come with us, Herr Dobler. You can explain so many things.

DOBLER. I'll be glad to. [*Shaking hands with Frau Beermann and bowing.*]

BEERMANN. Come soon again, Herr Poet.

BOLLAND. And think over the story I told you.

[*Dobler goes out left, following Frau Bolland, Effie and Fräulein Koch.*]

Frau Lund [*to Frau Beermann*]. I'll just have a cup of coffee.

Frau Beermann. I'll tell them to make a fresh cup for you. A fresh cup of coffee. [*To the butler who is clearing the table.*] Tell the chef — [*Butler goes out through the middle door. In the meantime Frau Bolland again appears through left.*]

Frau Bolland. Adolph!

Bolland. Yes — wifey?

Frau Bolland. Thursday the circus comes to town, don't forget to reserve seats.

Bolland. All right!

Frau Bolland [*while going out*]. I'm still a child when the circus comes.

[*Frau Lund seats herself on sofa. Next to her on the right Frau Beermann; Beermann and Bolland sit opposite in large leather chairs. Hauser is standing behind the sofa leaning against it.*]

Frau Lund [*to Hauser*]. Tell me Judge, where have you been keeping yourself all this time?

Hauser. In my office, Frau Lund, only in my office. But I hear that you were on the Riviera.

Frau Lund. Four weeks in Monte Carlo. Children, I gambled like an old *viveur*.

Beermann. What luck?

Frau Lund. I lost, of course — I'm too old to set the world on fire. But, Beermann, I hear all sorts of surprises about you. You are a candidate for the Reichstag?

Beermann. Yes, they nominated me.

Frau Lund. Who are "they"?

BEERMANN. The combined Liberals and Conservatives. . . .

HAUSER. And the Conservatives and Liberals combined.

FRAU LUND. Formerly these were distinct parties.

HAUSER. Formerly,— formerly.

BEERMANN. Now there is fusion.

FRAU LUND [*to Frau Beermann*]. You never told me that your husband was in politics.

FRAU BEERMANN. He never was — up to two weeks ago.

FRAU LUND. How quickly things change! And of all the people . . . you!

BEERMANN. What's so startling in that?

FRAU LUND. You told me that you never even read the newspapers.

BOLLAND. We all are cordially grateful to Beermann that in an hour of need he made this sacrifice.

FRAU LUND. The way you talk about the "hour of need" and "sacrifice" Herr Kommerzienrat, it seems to me that you would have been the better candidate.

BOLLAND. Oh, I am too pronouncedly Liberal.

HAUSER. And that's an incurable disease!

BOLLAND. At any rate it makes my nomination impossible. A man was needed who was not known as a party-man.

FRAU LUND. It would seem then that our friend Beermann has become a politician because he . . . is no politician?

HAUSER. That's what is known as "fusion."

BEERMANN. Allow me to ask a question. Why should I not become a Reichstag deputy?

HAUSER. Quite right! Frau Lund — tell him — why shouldn't he?

BEERMANN. Because I am a novice in politics? We all have to make a start.

HAUSER. It's the only calling where one can start any day, Frau Lund, without being called upon to produce qualifications.

BOLLAND. There you can tell the lawyer. You'd like to establish a civil service examination for members of the Reichstag?

HAUSER. You are not afraid that it might hurt them?

BEERMANN [*with importance*]. Let me tell you, Judge. What a person achieves in real life is far greater than all your book wisdom. We have too many lawyers anyway. It's one of our national misfortunes.

FRAU LUND [*merrily to Frau Beermann*]. Look! He's beginning to debate already.

BOLLAND [*careless pose*]. As you know, I run a soap factory where I employ four hundred and sixty-two workmen . . . let me repeat it, four hundred and sixty-two workmen. Their livelihood and welfare lies in the palm of my hand; don't you think that requires brains?

HAUSER. But . . .

BOLLAND [*interrupting*]. Do you realize what the amount of detail and the management of the whole factory means?

HAUSER. But friend Beermann never even worked in a soap factory. How can that apply to him?

BEERMANN. Oh, what's the use of discussing things if you're joking.

HAUSER. Really, I can't see the connection.

BEERMANN. At any rate, I'm a better candidate than the book-binder whom the Socialists have put up against me.

BOLLAND. Beermann has had greater experience and has a broader point of view.

FRAU LUND. Then there's something else I heard about Herr Beermann, that I don't like at all.

BEERMANN. About me?

FRAU LUND. Yes, I hear that you are the President of the new Society for the Suppression of Vice. What makes you do such things? That isn't nice.

FRAU BEERMANN. I fully agree with you.

BEERMANN. You do? For what reasons? When honest men select me as their President, is that mere flattery?

FRAU LUND. It is not becoming to you, and you are insincere in it.

FRAU BEERMANN. It's as false as anything can be, and you speak about problems which you have never understood.

BEERMANN. Pardon me! I ought to know best what is becoming for me.

FRAU LUND. There's no one in the world I dislike as much as a preacher. But if a person wants to be one . . . then, according to the gospel he ought to live on bread and water. It doesn't go well with champagne and lobster.

BEERMANN. Do the Scriptures command that we must be poor to be honorable?

FRAU LUND. No, Beermann, but if I still remember, they speak of a camel and a needle.

BOLLAND. The ladies evidently are not acquainted with the purposes of our new society. I am sure they would subscribe to every one of the principles which are incorporated in our By-laws.

FRAU LUND. I certainly would not.

BOLLAND [*feeling in his side pocket*]. At least read our "Appeal to the Public."

FRAU LUND [*refusing*]. No, thank you.

BOLLAND. Every woman will rejoice when she reads it.

FRAU LUND. Do you think so? How exceedingly amusing your societies are! So, cards and bowling no

longer offer sufficient entertainment. You have to moralize.

HAUSER. I can't help thinking of the notorious starvation freak at the circus who gets his meals on the sly everyday.

DR. WASNER. Of course, every conviction can be made ridiculous once it's regarded as insincere. You shouldn't accuse without proof.

HAUSER. Herr Professor, politeness requires that each individual be regarded as the exception — but not an entire club.

BOLLAND. It is a pity, indeed, that a great movement like ours is disposed of by a few trifling remarks. That embitters our task of curing the nation of social diseases.

FRAU LUND. Where did you get your Doctor's license to cure?

DR. WASNER. It's sad enough that the cure is left to only a few of us.

HAUSER. Well, I'll remain a patient. You'll need a few anyway to keep up your business.

BEERMANN. I consider all this a very cheap kind of humor. I used to joke about these matters myself, but if you will only look upon this problem from a serious point of view, when your eyes are opened to the . . .

FRAU BEERMANN. . . . Your newly acquired ways of talking are quite unbearable.

BEERMANN. Please, don't make a scene.

FRAU BEERMANN. We have been married for twenty-six years; have been very fortunate with our own children. Why worry about other people?

BEERMANN. You are not logical, my love. The mere fact that I brought up my children properly is all the more reason for my joining this movement. . . .

FRAU BEERMANN. You didn't lose much sleep about their education.

BEERMANN. Evidently I didn't neglect anything.

FRAU LUND. I'm afraid you pride yourselves on a degree of willpower you never exercised.

BEERMANN. Never exercised? My dear Frau Lund, what do you know about the temptations which confront us men. What does a woman know about them?

FRAU LUND. The only thing we women don't know about is the manner in which these temptations terminate.

BEERMANN. Our movement intends to do away with these very deceptions. We want to protect the traditions of the home which women treasure.

FRAU LUND. No. We, women also treasure modesty. We dislike to see men pretend to have better morals than they actually have.

BEERMANN. Seriously, Frau Lund. Public immorality must hurt you more.

FRAU LUND. You are mistaken. It requires a genuine manly feeling to sympathize with misery.

DR. WASNER. Misery and vice are different problems.

FRAU LUND. They're not. And that is why we will never agree.

FRAU BEERMANN. All the more reason why my husband should not set himself up as an example. He knows nothing of worry or care.

BEERMANN. We can never subscribe to Frau Lund's principles.

FRAU LUND. No principles, please!

BOLLAND. Out of sheer opposition you will say that you hold different ones from us.

FRAU LUND. No. I will say that I hold none at all.

BOLLAND and WASNER [*together*]. But, *gnädige Frau!*

FRAU LUND. I can't help it. I lost them some place on my journey through life. I have learned that all your principles have loop holes through which people can conveniently slip out and take their friends along with them. So I had my choice of either surrendering them or dishonestly preaching them to others.

DR. WASNER. Real principles of life are never given up.

HAUSER [*with sarcasm*]. Cheers from the gallery!

BOLLAND. Principles of morality are the laws of nature — they are her dictates.

FRAU LUND. Is that the reason you have started your Society for the Suppression of Vice? Do you imagine your by-laws are stronger than the laws of nature?

DR. WASNER. May I make just one remark?

BEERMANN. What is it?

DR. WASNER [*stroking his beard*]. In summing up the matter we can come to this decision: women have a beautiful privilege. Certain facts in life remain a closed book to them. We, men, unfortunately have to come into contact with them.

HAUSER. Did you say *unfortunately?*

DR. WASNER. Please don't interrupt. I maintain "unfortunately"! For the last four years, I have been persistently following obscene literature, and to-day I have gotten together a collection of it, which I dare say is pretty complete. So I am speaking of matters about which I am thoroughly informed. [*With importance.*] The degree of vulgarity our people have reached is incredible.

FRAU LUND. And you have been the "persistent collector" of this vulgarity?

DR. WASNER. Let me assure you that I took upon myself this task with loathing.

HAUSER. Herr Professor, in all my life I have never

met a man who for four years voluntarily did something which was loathsome to him.

DR. WASNER. You have no business to make such a remark.

HAUSER. Have you derived no satisfaction from it at all?

DR. WASNER. Satisfaction — if you mean the satisfaction of participating in the uplift of our people.

FRAU LUND. Uplift? Our reformers capitalize our national lack of good taste. Good proof of that are the moral works of art which you patronize.

DR. WASNER. The matter we are discussing is more serious than reforming bad taste.

FRAU LUND. There is nothing more serious.

DR. WASNER [*knowingly*]. If you but knew, Frau Lund!

FRAU LUND. I don't have to call and see your collection. Frankly, to me, the most obscene picture in your gallery could not be more disgusting than the talk you carry on in your meetings.

BEERMANN. Oh! Oh!

FRAU LUND. The nudity of the human body is not disgusting. It is the nudity of your mind. No vice is as repulsive as that virtue of yours which loudly uncovers itself in public — in market places. Vice has at least the shame to hide itself.

BEERMANN [*to Bolland*]. Can you understand her?

BOLLAND. I must admit, I can't.

DR. WASNER. *Gnädige Frau* stated that vice hides itself. But in spite of that it exists.

BOLLAND. Yes, she admitted that it exists.

DR. WASNER. Shall we tolerate it merely because it crawls into dark nooks and corners?

FRAU LUND. You reformers! Let more sunshine

into this world and vice will not find so many dark corners and nooks to hide in.

BOLLAND. You would not be as opposed to us if you had a son who would be exposed to the temptations of our great cities.

FRAU LUND. I would be ashamed of myself if for personal reasons I became narrow-minded.

BEERMANN. But just stop to think! Picture a healthy young man in his prime falling into the hands of one of these abominable creatures!

FRAU LUND. I could picture something worse than that.

BEERMANN. Still worse?

FRAU LUND. For instance, if he should, with all the credulity of youth, enter into the work of your society.

BOLLAND. Well! Well!

BEERMANN. You don't seem to take anything seriously to-day.

FRAU LUND. Very seriously; this young man perhaps does reach the stage where he sincerely pities your so-called abominable creature. Then he has really advanced in his morality. Let the pity impress itself deeply upon him and your abominable creature has preached better to him than all your high-sounding phrases.

BOLLAND. I am simply dumbfounded.

DR. WASNER. Then you even believe that our society exerts a bad influence?

FRAU LUND [*very positively*]. Yes.

BOLLAND [*with irony*]. Fancy! University Professors, philanthropists and a general who are with us in this work — they are, of course, the ones who are likely to corrupt the morals of the younger generation. Frau Lund, no doubt, would like to send our young men to the good Ladies of the Pavement.

DR. WASNER. In what way is our influence bad?

FRAU LUND [*with warmth*]. The young man who joins your society does it only to ape you and to advance his own ends and vainglory. He forever deprives himself of understanding the meaning of life and of becoming helpful to those who suffer.

BOLLAND. Well what do you think of such statements?

FRAU BEERMANN. They are splendid. I would be very thankful if my boy would embody the ideals of Frau Lund.

BEERMANN. Lena, I simply forbid you to say such things.

FRAU BEERMANN. Really?

BEERMANN. Everybody knows that Frau Lund is a radical, but I don't want you to fall into that habit.

FRAU BEERMANN. I don't acquire new habits as rapidly as you.

HAUSER [*to Beermann*]. Don't get excited. A politician must give everyone an opportunity to express his views.

DR. WASNER. I teach young people and I heartily wish they'd continue to seek their ideals among high minded men and not in the dark city streets.

BOLLAND. Right! And not in the dark city streets.

FRAU LUND. Nor there, Herr Kommerzienrat, where the veil of shame is rudely torn from inborn sensitiveness and it is shorn of every secret charm.

DR. WASNER. Correct! We do want to deprive it of its charm.

FRAU LUND. You succeed in doing that; no tenderness can survive the brutal frankness of your meetings.

DR. WASNER. It is not a national German trait to sugar-coat sin.

FRAU LUND. Why do you confound all lack of refinement with the national character?

DR. WASNER. Because it is good German to call a spade a spade.

BEERMANN [*getting up*]. Why argue to no purpose? Let's start our game of skat.

BOLLAND. Because it appears to be a conflict of two different philosophies.

BEERMANN [*rises, goes to card table, opens a drawer, takes out a deck of cards and opens them*]. It's always the same old story. Never start anything with women! They must have the last word. [*Sits down at card table. Bolland gets up and sits beside him.*]

FRAU LUND [*laughing*]. Spoken again like a typical reformer.

DR. WASNER [*rising*]. I don't want to continue this argument, but if by any chance you have gained the impression that I regard this matter from a prejudiced view point, I will cheerfully admit it. I do.

BEERMANN [*calling*]. Oh, do come on, Herr Professor.

DR. WASNER [*turning to card table*]. I'm coming. [*To others.*] I admit with pride that I am prejudiced. For me there exists only one question: How can I best serve my fatherland?

BOLLAND. Herr Professor!

DR. WASNER [*turning to table*]. Just a moment. . . . [*To others.*] Let the sturdy qualities of our people be conserved. That stand is unassailable. Then I will be sure that my efforts have at least . . .

BEERMANN [*loudly*]. But, my dear Wasner!

WASNER [*not dismayed, continuing*]. . . .at least a national scope.

HAUSER. Wouldn't you rather play skat, professor?

WASNER [*going over to card table*]. There remains

only one thing for me to say. If I have used sharp words, I want to apologize. [*Takes a seat.*]

BEERMANN. You deal, Professor.

DR. WASNER [*shuffling the cards and talking at the same time*]. For me there exists but one ideal. That which Tacitus described as it once prevailed among the old Teutons. *Quamquam severa illic matrimonia nec ullam morum partem magis laudaveris.* [*He lets Bolland cut and then deals.*] The most praiseworthy trait of the Teutons was the strictness of their marriage customs. *Nam prope soli Barbarorum singulis uxoribus contenti sunt.* They were almost the only barbarians to content themselves with a single wife.

BEERMANN [*loudly*]. *Tournee!*

BOLLAND. I'll go you!

BEERMANN. Twenty!

BOLLAND. I'll better that!

BEERMANN. Take it! *Gras-Solo!*

[*They play.*]

[*Hauser, Frau Lund, Frau Beermann remain sitting at right.*]

FRAU LUND. At last the Fatherland is saved.

FRAU BEERMANN. It's the only occupation for which nature intended them. They should not tinker with national problems.

HAUSER. Have patience. Political ambition dies out after the first defeat.

FRAU BEERMANN. . . . which I hope will happen.

HAUSER. That's as certain as fate. Else he never would have been nominated.

BEERMANN [*calling from the card table*]. I have pretty sharp hearing!

HAUSER. A very fine acquisition, Beermann, when you grow old.

BOLLAND [*throwing a card on the table*]. Fifty-nine and four make sixty-three! The rest you can take.

[*They throw down their cards; Bolland collects them and shuffles.*]

WASNER [*half turning to Hauser*]. And then there is the celebrated passage, "*Ergo septa pudicitia agunt, nullis . . . spectaculorum illecebris corruptæ.*"

BEERMANN. I have six cards.

BOLLAND. The bottom one belongs to the Professor.

WASNER [*as before, continuing*]. So the wife lived surrounded by tenderness and care . . . and so forth, "*Literarum secreta. . . .*" Secret communications were not tolerated by either husband or wife.

BEERWANN. Please drop that Tacitus. It's your chance to lead. . . .

WASNER. I pass. . . .

BOLLAND. So do I.

BOLLAND [*loudly and enthusiastically*]. That's the way to get at them! Trumps! And trumps again.

WASNER [*murmuring*]. "*Paucissima adulteria in tam numerosa gente. . . .*" [*Gradually lapses into silence and then continues to play with energy.*]

FRAU LUND [*with a glance towards the card table*]. Why do we take our principles so seriously. . . . It's really ridiculous how our every opinion soon turns into religious beliefs.

WASNER. The matter is dead serious.

FRAU LUND. Who will think of it to-morrow?

HAUSER [*nodding towards card table*]. Not they, of course. But there are cleverer people. The so-called thinking public in Germany must have some national problem to solve. It finds some such, readily enough in order to play with it. Meanwhile they take no notice that the party in power * are lining their pockets.

FRAU LUND. Haven't they always been doing that?

* Men with the brass buttons.

HAUSER. Yes, but not with such ease. Here and there they were rapped over the knuckles. But nowadays they could cart away the entire capitol.

FRAU LUND. There's not so much left to-day.

HAUSER. A couple of pieces anyhow to take along as keepsakes.

FRAU LUND. In my days I saw one reform after another on the bargain counter; but we women remain mere spectators while ideals come and go; we can not realize how much they mean to men.

HAUSER. My dear Frau Lund, if a real reform should effectively rise among us some day, then you women will have to lend a helping hand. With those [*nodding towards card-table*] kindergarten heroes nothing can be accomplished.

FRAU BEERMANN. What influence can we exert so long as men organize their societies for the protection of women's virtue!

HAUSER. These henpecked gentlemen always nominate themselves chastity's guardians.

FRAU BEERMANN. They are of importance only when they can get some one to listen. I'd like to go to their meetings and tell them that.

HAUSER. Their meetings — bosh! Their sort only couple their nonsense with a few self-evident generalities which no one would really oppose. No, first of all they must be educated and that you women alone can accomplish.

FRAU LUND. You say that as if *we* had any influence on public opinion.

HAUSER. You do all the applauding. The whole game is played for you. If you withdraw your applause not a single one of the peacocks of virtue will open up his gospel feathers for exhibition. It is indeed of great importance to you that they do not banish all refinement from our social life.

Frau Lund * [*citing*].

"Yes, while still thy sanctuaries of pleasure
Crowned this earth like in Arcadia
Joy had no penalty nor trader's measure. . . .

Dr. Wasner [*when the citation began listened over his cards, now falls in with deep bass*].

". . . Venus Amathusia."

Bolland [*angrily breaking in*]. Man alive, why didn't you play your Ace of Spades? If you had brought out that Ace you'd have a trump — then you'd beat this with a trump . . . and then another trum. . . .

Beermann. Now, beloved friends and countrymen, no post-mortem speeches. [*While dealing cards.*] You cut, Bolland.

Bolland [*cutting cards*]. Make use of your trumps, Herr Professor. I am trying to play into your hands.

Dr. Wasner. I thought . . .

Bolland. You didn't. If you had you'd play differently.

Beermann [*speaking to Frau Lund, while dealing*]. How far have you gotten with your moralizing? Have we agreed yet — [*Laughing.*] Yes; yes; these women folks!

Wasner [*arranging cards in his hand*]. They were citing Schiller a moment ago. We must not forget, ladies, that it was Schiller himself who awakened the national spirit of our race.

Hauser. Your national spirit unfortunately found its way into the strangest kinds of containers.

* In original:

Frau Lund [*zitierend*].

Ja, da eur Wonnedienst noch glänzte,
Wie ganz anders, anders war es da!
Da man deine Tempel noch bekränzte. . . .

Dr. Wasner [*hat beim Zitieren der Schillerischer Verse herüber gehorcht und fällt nun mit tiefen Basse ein*]. . . . Venus Amathusia.

DR. WASNER. I decidedly protest against such a poor opinion. If the sincere religious sentiment of the German element . . .

BOLLAND [*interrupting him*]. We are waiting for you, Herr Professor. Are you finally going to announce your cards?

DR. WASNER [*continuing his pathetic tone*]. I pass.

HAUSER. The steady contact with school children keeps our educators refreshingly naïve. That man still believes in the superiority of the Teutonic element.

FRAU LUND. And in the stability of our special German moral standard.

HAUSER. Until some little scandal crops up again. By the way, we shall soon have one right in our city.

FRAU BEERMANN [*with interest*]. Here?

HAUSER. To-morrow you'll read all about it in the newspapers. The police have made a discovery which may prove more than they bargained for.

FRAU BEERMANN. Here? [*Beerman, head sideways, listens over his cards.*]

HAUSER. Last night the police arrested a woman who kept a very open house. She colored it by going under a fancy French name, and they say only entertained the best of society. She kept a diary which fell into the hands of the police.

BEERMANN [*he leaves his seat, comes forward, right*]. A diary?

BOLLAND [*drops his cards and rises*]. What sort of a diary?

HAUSER. Oh! Just a naughty little inventory of all of her visitors.

BEERMANN. What is the name of the lady?

HAUSER. Some French name which sounds to me like *rouge.*

BEERMANN. I can't understand how you could forget her name.

BOLLAND. I can't either as long as you seem to know all about it.

FRAU BEERMANN [*to Beermann*]. But, Fritz, why should you worry about it?

BEERMANN. Well . . . am I the President of the Vice Suppression Society or, am I not . . .?

CURTAIN

ACT II

An office at Police Headquarters. To rear on the left stands the Assessor's desk. To the right against the wall, the desk of Reisacher, the police clerk. Left front is a sofa with two chairs. On the right wall is a telephone. Side entrance left. Another entrance in the middle. Stroebel and Reisacher are seated with their backs to one another. Stroebel is reading a newspaper; Reisacher is writing. Short pause.

STROEBEL [*half turning*]. Reisacher!

REISACHER [*also turning*]. Yes, Herr Assessor.*

STROEBEL. Are you familiar with the expression "*those higher up*"?

REISACHER. Yes, Herr Assessor.

STROEBEL. What do you understand by it?

REISACHER. Those are the folks who are something and have money somewhere.

STROEBEL. Is it used to express contempt or class hatred?

REISACHER [*eagerly*]. Well . . . well! "*The higher ups*" are respected.

STROEBEL. Are you certain?

REISACHER. Absolutely.

[*They both turn around to their former positions; Stroebel continues to read, and Reisacher to write. Short pause.*]

* An assessor is a petty police official.

STROEBEL [*half turning*]. Reisacher!

REISACHER [*does likewise*]. Yes, Herr Assessor.

STROEBEL. After all, it means class hatred.

REISACHER. No, no.

STROEBEL. Pay attention. Here it says [*he reads*]: "Of course, for those higher up there are no laws." That means, I take it, that the rich are beyond the control of the law. By "control of the law," I wish you to understand I am attacking the humiliating and anarchistic notion that the law does not apply equally to rich and poor. Also I want to besmirch the rich, by designating them by a slang expression.

REISACHER. Yes, Herr Assessor.

STROEBEL. Then how can you say it does not express class hatred and contempt?

REISACHER. Because, then again, you see, people who have money are respected anyway.

STROEBEL. You will never learn to think precisely, Reisacher.

REISACHER. Yes, Herr Assessor.

[*Both resume their former positions. Short pause. Police Commissioner, Freiherr von Simbach, enters left. Stroebel lays aside his paper, rises and salutes. Reisacher writes hurriedly.*]

COMMISSIONER.* 'Morning, Herr Assessor. [*To Reisacher.*] Take your work outside, Reisacher, until I have finished. [*Reisacher exit through middle door.*] I want to ask you a few questions, Herr Stroebel. [*Stroebel bows. The Commissioner during the conversation takes center of stage and speaks nonchalantly and somewhat drawingly.*] I read your report. Day before yesterday, that was on Saturday, you ordered the arrest of a certain woman.

STROEBEL. Yes, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER. Well, what about her?

* President of Police, in original.

STROEBEL. According to the report of Lieutenant Schmuttermaier, we have in our hands a very dangerous person.

COMMISSIONER. Is that so!

STROEBEL. Within a short time she has almost demoralized our city.

COMMISSIONER. She has been in the city about three or four years. . . .

STROEBEL. She has, according to the report.

COMMISSIONER. In what way has she been dangerous? Did bald headed gentlemen loosen up a bit in her house or are there special charges against her?

STROEBEL. No special ones, but her whole behavior. She had a beautiful apartment in the best residential district. According to the report, the neighbors began to talk about her. She dressed in a rather fast and fashionable manner. . . .

COMMISSIONER. Then because she did not cater to the common people, you consider her so terrible?

STROEBEL. No, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER. I thought not. Remember, please, I don't want you to get any of the popular ideas about the corruption of our best society. Slit skirts cause as much harm. [*Stroebel bows.*] What is her name?

STROEBE. Ninon De Hauteville. But her real name is Therese Hochstetter.

COMMISSIONER. H-a-u-t-e V-i-l-l-e?

STROEBEL. She comes of a good family. Her father was a Peruvian consul. When he lost his money, she married a consular secretary. He divorced her four years ago.

COMMISSIONER. Indeed. So she is a person of refinement.

STROEBEL. But she has . . .

COMMISSIONER. . . . A demoralizing influence. I

know all about that. Tell me, what made you arrest her?

STROEBEL [*with importance*]. Eight days ago, I received a letter severely rebuking the police because her place was tolerated. . . .

COMMISSIONER. Who was the letter from?

STROEBEL [*hesitatingly*]. It was . . . really . . . anonymous.

COMMISSIONER. I hope that you are very careful about anonymous communications.

STROEBEL. Generally, I pay little attention to them. But this letter was so full of details, I simply had to consider it. Of course, only as a hint and I intended to get proof. I gave it to Schmuttermaier and told him to keep the Hochstetter woman under strict surveillance. Saturday at noon we obtained positive evidence.

COMMISSIONER. Then?

STROEBEL. Then I ordered Schmuttermaier to raid the place . . .

COMMISSIONER. . . . During which you found a diary in her apartments?

STROEBEL. Yes, Commissioner; a diary with the names of her visitors. The dates and their social standing. Everything.

COMMISSIONER. Have you finished reading it?

STROEBEL. No, sir. I just glanced at it. I only got it from Schmuttermaier an hour ago. I was not in the office yesterday.

COMMISSIONER [*thoughtfully*]. It's too late to do anything to-day. [*Consulting his watch.*] Let me see. Bring me an exact report of all important names contained in the diary . . . at ten to-morrow morning.

STROEBEL. Yes, Commissioner, at ten o'clock.

COMMISSIONER. And remember, it's very important that you make this report personally. Don't let the

clerk see the diary. It has not yet been in his hands?

STROEBEL [*going to his desk*]. No. It's locked up in my desk.

COMMISSIONER. Time enough to bring it to me tomorrow morning when you make your report.

STROEBEL. How do you want me to get my data, Commissioner? Shall I summon the important people involved?

COMMISSIONER [*with emphasis*]. Only . . . the important . . . names . . . that's all. By the way, how far have you gone in the case? Have you taken any further steps?

STROEBEL. No. I will examine the Hochstetter woman in a little while. . . .

COMMISSIONER. And Schmuttermaier? Has he orders to make any further raids?

STROEBEL. Not yet. I want to read the diary first.

COMMISSIONER. Above all, I do not want him to act without instructions. People of no importance like to do important things.

STROEBEL. Yes, Commissioner. Your orders will be carried out.

COMMISSIONER. Orders? I never give orders. You have your duties to perform. I don't care to tell you what to do. . . . But there must be no further raids until I have seen the diary.

STROEBEL. Certainly, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER. At the same time, don't neglect your duty.

STROEBEL. I will do everything necessary for the promotion of public decency.

COMMISSIONER [*who has been pacing the room, turns suddenly.*] Public decency? Very well, very well. . . . [*Short pause.*] We occupy a most peculiar position. Do we not, Herr Stroebel? [*Stroebel bows.*] We know fully the existing difference between official

. . . and let me say . . . personal sensitiveness, do we not? [*Stroebel bows in accord.*] I mention this merely because you spoke of public decency. There is a decency about which you and I privately might have most interesting discussions. As far as I am concerned, such decency can be without limits. But there is another — the public decency — which it is our business to police. This has its very precise limits. For example, a scandal. Scandal of any description. Am I right, Herr Assessor?

STROEBEL [*clicks his heels together*]. Certainly, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER. That brings me to another matter. For the past few weeks, there has been in the city, a so-called Society for the Suppression of Vice. Have you any sympathy with these people?

STROEBEL. I know of their aims. . . .

COMMISSIONER. Their aims do not interest me a bit. I mean, do you personally cooperate with them?

STROEBEL. Not . . . yet.

COMMISSIONER. Not yet? . . . Hem! . . .This Society is likely to interest itself in this case. If someone comes to see me, Herr Stroebel, I will refer him to you. [*Stroebel bows.*] Kindly bear this one thing in mind. These men have political ambition, and are playing to the press. On the whole the thing shows conservative tendencies.

STROEBEL. Certainly, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER. Welcome them with open arms. Agree gratefully to every suggestion for the betterment of the people, *et cetera.* Listen with respectful appreciation but do nothing further.

STROEBEL [*uncertain*]. Nothing further? . . .

COMMISSIONER. No . . . nothing further.

STROEBEL. Yes, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER. These people must remain assured

that they wield a great influence. As a matter of fact, they have none at all and it's a good thing they haven't.

STROEBEL. So, I may . . .

COMMISSIONER. . . . Do everything you can be responsible for. As a matter of principle, I do not like to give orders. You will submit that report then [*consulting his watch*] at ten to-morrow? Good morning! [*Goes toward the door left, remains standing a moment, then turns around.*] You have been rather zealous in your work, I must say. [*Stroebel bows slightly.*] To arrest a woman on the strength of an anonymous letter shows excessive zeal. [*Stroebel bows slightly.*] I like to see my men energetic but [*clears his throat*] bear in mind what I just said. Careful of a scandal! Good morning! [*Exit.*]

[*Stroebel sits down and stares at ceiling. He swings his chair around, then whistles. Reisacher comes in through middle door and seats himself at his desk. He coughs.*]

STROEBEL [*half turning*]. Reisacher.

REISACHER [*does likewise*]. Yes, Herr Assessor.

STROEBEL. How long have you been in the police department?

REISACHER. It will be eighteen years this fall.

STROEBEL. You have seen many a change, no doubt?

REISACHER. Surely.

STROEBEL. Tell me, how long has our Commissioner been in office?

REISACHER. The Commissioner? Oh . . . it's seven. No, let me see, it's eight years. . . .

STROEBEL. Hem . . . do you really suppose he wants us to keep our eyes wide open all the time?

REISACHER [*eagerly*]. Certainly. That's what he wants.

STROEBEL. Does he? . . . [*Short pause.*] I had

an idea he didn't want us to be too strict for fear of notoriety.

REISACHER [*eagerly*]. No, no. He certainly would not like that.

STROEBEL [*turns around completely*]. Listen, Reisacher, you contradict yourself all the time.

REISACHER [*turns around likewise*]. I beg your pardon, Herr Stroebel. May I suggest . . .

STROEBEL. But you are always contradicting yourself. First you say yes, and then you say no.

REISACHER. I beg your pardon, Herr Assessor Stroebel. I wanted to say that in the Police Department it is like this: Everything you do is all right, if it turns out all right.

STROEBEL [*turns back to his desk*]. You will never learn to formulate a thought precisely.

REISACHER [*also turns*]. All right, Herr Stroebel.

[*Short pause. Stroebel reads. Reisacher writes. A commotion is heard through the middle door, which is thrown open and Ninon De Hauteville enters. Behind her a policeman, who holds her tightly by the arm. She tries to free herself.*]

HAUTEVILLE [*she wears a large picture hat, and is highly perfumed*]. Keep your hands off me. I haven't killed anyone. Please, let me go.

STROEBEL [*he has risen*]. What's the matter?

POLICE OFFICER [*releasing her, stands at attention*]. Have the honor sir, to report this disreputable woman — the Hochstetter person.

HAUTEVILLE. Please, help me, sir. I am being handled like the commonest criminal.

STROEBEL. Why do you keep that hat on? You are not paying us a visit?

HAUTEVILLE. Indeed not! I am not paying a visit.

If I lived to be a hundred, it would never occur to me to pay you a visit.

STROEBEL. Don't talk so much. Do you understand? [*To Reisacher.*] Get your report book ready.

HAUTEVILLE. Is this the complaint office? I demand to know at least why I was arrested.

STROEBEL. Oh, here you'll find that out soon enough. [*To the officer.*] You can go now. [*Officer exit through middle door.*]

HAUTEVILLE. Oh, *Monsieur,* what shameful treatment. I was locked up in a cell with two ordinary street walkers. You will help me, won't you?

STROEBEL [*who has crossed over to Reisacher*]. Please don't be so familiar.

HAUTEVILLE. I am so helpless. No one will listen to me. No one answers me. An awful looking woman brought me a cup of yellow broth and a rusty spoon — [*indicating with her hand*] so big. "Eat," she said, and threw it down and left. You will see to it, sir, that my friends are notified, won't you?

STROEBEL [*glancing over Reisacher's shoulder*]. Your friends cannot help you here. [*To Reisacher.*] Don't make the margin so wide. You are wasting good paper. [*To Hauteville.*] Your friends can do nothing at all for you.

HAUTEVILLE. You think so, do you? One single word and I'll be set free.

STROEBEL [*contemptuously*]. Indeed!

HAUTEVILLE. Before the day is over everyone of you will have to apologize to me. Yes, before this day is over.

STROEBEL. Certainly. [*To Reisacher.*] The word "Assessor" has two "*s*" in all cases.

HAUTEVILLE. If you people had the least idea whom you disturbed. If you knew whom you compelled to hide in the wardrobe.

STROEBEL [*turning quickly to Hauteville*]. In the wardrobe? So! [*To Reisacher.*] Make a note of that, Reisacher. [*With emphasis.*] So someone escaped us by hiding in the wardrobe.

HAUTEVILLE. Yes, someone escaped you by hiding in the wardrobe.

STROEBEL [*suddenly very friendly.*] Upon my word, Madame, I believe that we understand each other fully. You are a clever woman. You will not try to deny the facts.

HAUTEVILLE. Not one solitary thing. I am most anxious that you should try to find out all.

STROEBEL. Bravo! I came near saying that I respect you for that. [*Benevolently.*] You know, Hochstetter, every man is liable to make a fool of himself now and then.

HAUTEVILLE. Indeed they are! I know best what fools men do make of themselves.

STROEBEL. Now and then people violate the law. But they ought not to deny it afterwards. That's the sad part of it, because we always find out the truth in the end.

HAUTEVILLE. I wish you had it now.

STROEBEL. We have a clue. But you are a woman of character, I admit. I take off my hat to you.

HAUTEVILLE. Indeed!

STROEBEL. I certainly do.

HAUTEVILLE. I was afraid I had lost all refinement after spending the last two nights in such company.

STROEBEL [*benevolently*]. No doubt, it was a trifle hard.

HAUTEVILLE. It was terrible. They really do make me pay for discreetness.

STROEBEL. Your patrons are the very men who make it so hard for you. They get you into troubie and then expect you to protect them. Isn't it so?

HAUTEVILLE. What an experience for me! To have my apartment raided at night and be simply dragged away myself.

STROEBEL. That is too much.

HAUTEVILLE. I was not even allowed to take along a change of underwear. Then I am locked up with women who have every known variety of vermin.

STROEBEL. And with all that they expect you to remain silent!

HAUTEVILLE. When I want to comb my hair, the matron gives me a comb which these women have been using a whole week.

STROEBEL. That simply can't go on.

HAUTEVILLE. And the air! I never knew that such odors existed on this earth.

STROEBEL. Still you are to shield the others! After all, you know, I think that discreetness is just talk.

HAUTEVILLE. Talk?

STROEBEL. I mean if anybody ever had a moral right to give things away, fully and freely, you are that person; . . . after all you have suffered.

HAUTEVILLE. That's right. I am that person.

STROEBEL. Well then; did somebody escape into that wardrobe?

HAUTEVILLE. Yes, somebody did escape into that wardrobe.

STROEBEL [*eagerly*]. Who? [*Short pause.*]

HAUTEVILLE [*laughs curtly*]. Who?

STROEBEL [*more sharply*]. Who on Saturday night at 10 o'clock escaped the search of the police by hiding in the wardrobe?

HAUTEVILLE [*laughs curtly*]. It is quite unnecessary for me to tell you that.

STROEBEL [*sharply*]. Why?

HAUTEVILLE. You are certain to find it out ultimately.

STROEBEL. Ultimately?

HAUTEVILLE. Even if I wanted to I could not tell! Lord, when a person gets strictly accustomed to never mentioning any name, it is almost impossible to do it. I believe that I would have to learn how first.

STROEBEL [*shouting*]. And you will learn it; I promis you that. You . . .

HAUTEVILLE. *Mais Monsieure!*

STROEBEL [*shouting*]. No "Monsieur" about it. Here you'll talk good plain English.

HAUTEVILLE. But why are you getting so excited?

STROEBEL [*to Reisacher*]. I am nice to this person. I reason with her, and she says that she will first have to learn how to expose her crowd. [*Shouts.*] Decency is what you'll have to learn and I'll teach it to you.

HAUTEVILLE. Oh, not this very minute.

STROEBEL. I know you. I know your sort! You want to gain time so that you can concoct the blackest lies.

HAUTEVILLE [*calmly*]. That would be entirely superfluous. The cleverest lie could not help me half as much as the simple truth.

STROEBEL. Out with it!

HAUTEVILLE. It's better if you find it out through someone else.

STROEBEL. That's your opinion.

HAUTEVILLE. You would only be embarrassed and I would be guilty of a breach of confidence.

STROEBEL [*with contempt*]. As though people confided in such as you.

HAUTEVILLE. I think that they rely upon the fact that our loyalty is not "just talk."

STROEBEL [*again calm*]. Listen to me. I do not think that you entirely understand your position. [*Hauteville shrugs her shoulders.*] No, I don't think that you know at all what is involved.

HAUTEVILLE. On the contrary it is far worse that you don't seem to realize who is involved.

STROEBEL [*quickly*]. In what?

HAUTEVILLE. In the wardrobe.

STROEBEL. Have you lost your senses? You are a prisoner here. Do you want to poke fun at us?

HAUTEVILLE. No.

STROEBEL. Then don't consider yourself so important with those meaning insinuations.

HAUTEVILLE. If I did, I'd soon lose my importance after eating that yellow broth from those rusty tin plates.

STROEBEL. And that will continue for some time.

HAUTEVILLE [*energetically*]. No, it will not. I tell you right now that I will not spend another night in that dirty hole. I will not be mistreated any longer.

STROEBEL [*with sarcasm*]. Of course we are going to ask you for your kind permission.

HAUTEVILLE. I will not remain here. If they think I will let them ruin me, they're very much mistaken. This is an outrage and here fair play stops.

STROEBEL. The likes of you and fair play!

HAUTEVILLE [*bitterly*]. Yes, the likes of me. Every day we hear the confessions of those very people who publicly show contempt for us. We know how false are all virtuous words with which they condemn us, but we remain silent.

STROEBEL. Of course, you do all this out of pure sense of fair play? *He imitates the motion of counting money.*]

HAUTEVILLE. Money? . . . My dear fellow, with money our patrons pay well for that very thing which they later on call indecent. You get as much decency from us for money as you get from other people, but believe me, we could shatter many illusions.

STROEBEL. Well, make a beginning right here.

HAUTEVILLE. It ought to be impossible here. The police have as few illusions as we. That is, provided they are properly instructed.

STROEBEL. That's right now, put us in the same class with yourself.

HAUTEVILLE. Why not? We and the police could easily ruin the credit of virtue, but neither of us do it. You — you because you regard that credit as a good substitute for the principal, and we,— Lord, because we need this credit as well.

STROEBEL. Both of us?

HAUTEVILLE. The very moment that public virtue loses its credit, the secret vices will drop in market value.

STROEBEL. What are you talking about anyway?

HAUTEVILLE. I'm telling you why both of us must hush things up.

STROEBEL. Then you are not convinced that there is a real public morality?

HAUTEVILLE. You mean that morality which you put on with your street clothes? I know it well. Gentlemen take it off in my apartment and hang it up in my wardrobe, and there I can inspect it very thoroughly. It is truly remarkable how our respected gentlemen still make formal social visits in costumes which have so often been patched.

REISACHER [*who up to this point apparently without paying any attention, has been sitting with his back toward them, turns half way round*]. Pardon me, Herr Assessor.

STROEBEL [*impatiently*]. Now what do you want?

REISACHER. Pardon me, Herr Assessor, shall I put all this talk into the minutes?

STROEBEL. No, I will dictate to you later. [*To Hauteville.*] You know that you are not here to amuse yourself.

HAUTEVILLE. I know that.

STROEBEL. Listen to me quietly. You hinted before that if we kept you here another night you would confess everything. Well I tell you here and now that we will not keep you here one, but a number of nights. You can ease your conscience at once.

HAUTEVILLE. I would only make yours the heavier for it.

STROEBEL. My conscience?

HAUTEVILLE. Yes, if I tell you here, there will be no possibility of a mistake, but everything must remain a mistake.

STROEBEL. I have patience with you, but I will not let you fool me. Now get yourself together and consider every word. What must remain a mistake?

HAUTEVILLE. Everything that has happened since Saturday night.

STROEBEL. All that must remain a mistake?

HAUTEVILLE. It simply must not have happened. No one broke into my apartment. No one arrested me. No one compelled anyone to hide in the wardrobe.

STROEBEL [*shouts.*] And no one ever saw such an insolent female.

HAUTEVILLE. This browbeating.

STROEBEL. It is meant for such as you.

HAUTEVILLE [*indignantly stopping her ears*]. It reminds one so much of the tin plates and the comb.

STROEBEL [*angrily pacing the room*]. I never heard anything like it. Picture it! She makes insinuations as though we had something to be afraid of. [*He stops pacing and faces her.*] You evidently imagine that the whole government would run away from you.

HAUTEVILLE. No, but it ran away from your Lieutenant.

STROEBEL. Where?

HAUTEVILLE. Into the wardrobe.

STROEBEL [*pacing up and down*]. I will bring that fellow out of your wardrobe. I will bring him to light. Into bright daylight! [*Remains standing in front of Hauteville.*] What did you say?

HAUTEVILE. *Non.*

STROEBEL [*resuming his pacing*]. One of those fine fellows who wallow in the mire and then expect us to make exceptions. [*Stops pacing, facing Hauteville.*] What were you saying?

HAUTEVILLE. Nothing.

STROEBEL. Sad enough that now and again a half-way decent person strays into your place.

HAUTEVILLE. He can only regret that he was disturbed.

STROEBEL [*goes quickly to desk and unlocks a drawer*]. Besides, do not deceive yourself. We do not need your disclosures. [*He takes out a rather bulky paper, a school composition book, and holds it triumphantly in the air.*] There; do you recognize this?

HAUTEVILLE [*quietly, without a single trace of surprise*]. It looks like my diary.

STROEBEL. It is your book. It was found in your desk.

HAUTEVILLE [*very calm*]. The desk was locked.

STROEBEL. It was broken open. Well? What about your loyalty now?

HAUTEVILLE [*shrugs her shoulders*]. I kept it. I haven't a fire-proof safe.

STROEBEL [*contemptuously*]. Would you by chance like to show me the name?

HAUTEVILLE. What name?

STROEBEL. Of the gentleman in the wardrobe.

HAUTEVILLE [*laughs*]. His name really is not in it.

STROEBEL. Do not evade but show me.

HAUTEVILLE. Oh, there are parties whose names are not in the Hotel Register. They travel incognito.

STROEBEL [*persuadingly*]. Hochstetter, I have an impression that you are not such a stupid girl, and I believe that you would like to [*pointing to the diary*] take good care of your — patrons. If you do not immediately reveal the name of that man, I will summon the whole bunch.

HAUTEVILLE [*shrugs her shoulders*]. That's something I cannot stop you from doing.

STROEBEL. What then is your belief in fair play?

HAUTEVILLE. I never submitted that diary to you. You could not have gotten it from me voluntarily, but it quite suits me that the officer found it in my desk.

STROEBEL. Why?

HAUTEVILLE. Because he might have searched for it in the wardrobe.

STROEBEL. Now my patience is at an end. [*Presses the button on his desk.*] I will have no consideration for anyone.

HAUTEVILLE. After all, perhaps you will. For yourself.

[*Police officer enters.*]

STROEBEL. Take this woman downstairs. [*The officer leaves with Hauteville. Stroebel sits down, pushes the chair angrily to the desk, then gets up and throws the diary and several other books on the desk, saying to himself:*] Never heard anything like it! Such impudence!

[*Reisacher looks at him with amusement. A knock at the door.*]

STROEBEL [*formally*]. Come in!

BEERMANN [*enters hastily from the left. He breathes heavily. He has a handkerchief in his hand, with which he frequently mops his brow*]. Is this the proper department at last? I am being sent all around the building. [*Breathing heavily.*] I hope I am finally in the proper bureau.

STROEBEL. What do you want?

BEERMANN. Pardon me for a moment while I catch my breath. I climbed twice to the third floor and again down to the ground floor. The Commissioner sent me to room 147 and there they told me to go to room 174.

STROEBEL. Who sent you?

BEERMANN [*taking a deep breath*]. The Commissioner. I really wanted to speak to him personally, but he told me I should go to the gentleman who has "Morality." Are you the gentleman who has all the morality?

STROEBEL. Certainly.

BEERMANN. At last. [*Mopping his brow.*] Good God, when a matter is so urgent and so much depends on it they ought not to chase one all over the building. I must rest a bit. All this excitement and running up and down stairs. . . . So you are the gentleman who has the matter in hand.

STROEBEL. What matter?

BEERMANN. On Saturday night a lady was arrested. A Madam de Hauteville, and certain papers were taken from her. Have you those papers here?

STROEBEL. What business is that of yours?

BEERMANN. My name is Beermann; Fritz Beermann, the banker. I am the Chairman of the Society for the Suppression of Vice.

STROEBEL [*very politely*]. Oh, indeed! Pardon me! I didn't recall your name immediately, but I was expecting you.

BEERMANN [*startled*]. You — were expecting — me?

STROEBEL. The Commissioner said that you would undoubtedly call on us.

BEERMANN. He said that I undoubtedly would call? But he never mentioned a word to me about that, and I saw him just a moment ago. Perhaps after all it will be better if I go down to see him again?

STROEBEL. That is not necessary. I have full charge of the matter.

BEERMANN. Oh, yes, quite right; you have charge of the matter. And you have those writings here too?

STROEBEL. The diary? [*He indicates the desk.*] Here it is.

BEERMANN [*peeps anxiously over*]. Then it is a regular diary?

STROEBEL. Quite correctly kept. Gives date and names. Even little jesting remarks about the people concerned.

BEERMANN [*shouts*]. But that is an unheard of insolence!

STROEBEL. Yes.

BEERMANN. Why does she write such things? To what purpose? Can't she herself realize how dangerous it is? Fancy, a woman whose whole stock in trade is secrecy, keeping an address book of her patrons. Confound her!

STROEBEL. But to us as evidence it is priceless.

BEERMANN. I ask you — why does she record such things?

STROEBEL. We can only be glad of it, Herr Beermann.

BEERMANN. We?

STROEBEL. She'd lie. I tell you she'd deny everything, and that puts an end to the case. [*Holding the diary in the air.*] But here we have the whole bunch.

BEERMANN. As though she wanted to turn State's evidence. . .

STROEBEL. Let her just come to court with her confounded fine talk. [*Imitating Hauteville's manners:*] "It simply must not have happened." I will drive her to the wall with what happened. We will simply bring up those fellows, one after the other.

BEERMANN [*dismayed*]. To court!

STROEBEL. Certainly, and that means; hand on the Bible and swear. Then we shall see if "no one compelled anyone to hide in the wardrobe."

BEERMANN. How?

STROEBEL. They will not commit perjury.

BEERMANN. That's utterly impossible!

STROEBEL. I will make it quite warm for that man, in any event.

BEERMANN. But, Counselor!

STROEBEL [*clinking heels*]. Assessor Stroebel.

BEERMANN. But, Assessor, that is simply impossible. You do not want to ruin the family life of the entire city, do you?

STROEBEL. In what way?

BEERMANN. Do you expect a respectable gentleman to appear in court and in the presence of all people to say, yes; it is true that I . . . and so forth?

STROEBEL. Why not?

BEERMANN [*shouting*]. But they are all respectable fathers of families!

STROEBEL. But, my dear Herr Beermann, what difference does that make to me?

BEERMANN. It must make a difference. It makes a difference to everybody at all times.

STROEBEL. I assure you that I am not a bit sentimental.

BEERMANN [*glancing over to Reisacher*]. Could we have a few words together, alone?

STROEBEL. If you wish it. Reisacher, finish your police report in the outer office.

REISACHER. Certainly, Herr Assessor.

[*Takes several sheets of paper and goes out through the middle door.*]

STROEBEL. Do have a seat, Herr Beermann.

[*Beermann sits down on the sofa. Stroebel does likewise.*]

BEERMANN [*mopping his brow*]. A personal question, Herr Assessor, are you married?

STROEBEL. No.

BEERMANN. I thought not. If you had a family you would not speak in that fashion of sentimentality.

STROEBEL. If I had a family, I would not, to begin with, be involved in this.

BEERMANN. But . . .

STROEBEL. My name would not appear in the diary of Hauteville.

BEERMANN. You never can tell.

STROEBEL. Excuse me. What is there left of family life when such things happen?

BEERMANN. What do you mean? If nobody finds it out?

STROEBEL. But such a man must live constantly under a deception.

BEERMANN. My dear Assessor. If the white lie ceases in married life, the couple drifts apart.

STROEBEL. I cannot believe that!

BEERMANN [*persuadingly*]. Take my word for it. In every happy marriage the parties lie to each other to keep their affection from cooling.

STROEBEL. But both of them remain faithful.

BEERMANN. Not in the least.

STROEBEL. Don't say that!

BEERMANN. Not in the least; anyhow not to the very letter. A husband is true to his wife even if he . . . and so forth.

STROEBEL. Your views surprise me.

BEERMANN. This is what I mean. He is true in his own fashion. He remains kind to his wife, takes a good care of his family, and that is the principal thing. That other which you have in mind is only an ideal.

STROEBEL. Ideals are lived up to.

BEERMANN. Well, yes. But if we don't live up to them, we at least respect them.

STROEBEL. Herr Beermann, I am astounded. You are the President of the Society for the Suppression of Vice?

BEERMANN. Can I help it that I was elected?

STROEBEL. But at least you represent the views of your Society. I thought you came here for that reason.

BEERMANN. For what reason?

STROEBEL. To express your satisfaction at our discovery of the business of this person.

BEERMANN. You thought I came here on that account?

STROEBEL. Didn't you?

BEERMANN [*mopping his brow with his handkerchief*]. You'll have to pardon me, Herr Assessor; I am still affected by that running up and down stairs.

STROEBEL. Perhaps our conversation tires you?

BEERMANN. Don't mention it. I simply cannot follow you so quickly. A moment ago you mentioned a diary, didn't you?

STROEBEL. Of this Hauteville woman.— Yes.

BEERMANN. Have you been through this diary?

STROEBEL. No. I have not had time yet.

BEERMANN. But you just spoke about some jesting comments in it.

STROEBEL. Only those I noticed in glancing through it.

BEERMANN [*relieved*]. Ah!

STROEBEL. Besides, I must tell you, Herr Beermann, that the contents of this book must remain a secret to you. My orders are not to show it to anyone.

BEERMANN. No, no. I don't want to know anything about it.

STROEBEL. You will find out everything later when the matter comes up in court.

BEERMANN [*dismayed*]. Will it be read there?

STROEBEL. Certainly. To-day I can only tell you that we will proceed vigorously. You can satisfy your society on that point.

BEERMANN [*rising*]. But that doesn't satisfy me at all. Think of the consequences.

STROEBEL [*rising also*]. What do you care about the consequences. Your society has its very high aims. Your propaganda states that you will prosecute the outcast of society with iron energy and now you see your ideals realized.

BEERMANN. Our propaganda states that we will intervene from national, moral and social viewpoints, to protect the marriage vows. If this scandal becomes public the marriage relationship will be undermined.

STROEBEL. What sort of moral viewpoint do you call that?

BEERMANN. It is the Society's. Don't you understand that the influential class of society will be involved!

STROEBEL. Then that class will have only itself to blame.

BEERMANN. That's out of the question. We must find a loop-hole.

STROEBEL. Within the scope of the law there are no loop-holes.

BEERMANN. Don't tell *me* that. Well then, go around the law.

STROEBEL [*surprised*]. Herr Beermann!

BEERMANN. Of course! I have lived long enough to know that.

STROEBEL. I shall do my duty.

BEERMANN. Am I interfering with your duty? I belong to that class of people who respect the police only because the police respect our social position.

STROEBEL. I appreciate that.

BEERMANN. I also take part in political life. I am a candidate for the Reichstag and as such I have a decided opinion about these matters.

STROEBEL. Without doubt, Herr Beermann.

BEERMANN. Well then, there are, in extreme cases, ways around the law, and there must be.

STROEBEL. I am of a different opinion.

BEERMANN. God knows, it is not the business of the police to provoke this enormous scandal. All authority will be destroyed. It will shatter the respect of the masses for the people higher up.

STROEBEL. But this scandal was provoked — [*knocking on the diary with his finger*] — by these very people.

BEERMANN. If a man once in a while goes into a certain room — that is no scandal. It only becomes a scandal when the story is made known to every Tom, Dick and Harry. That's what must be prevented!

STROEBEL. I value the humane motive which evidently is prompting you, Herr Beermann. But you must admit that we are acting entirely in accord with the views of the classes you mention.

BEERMANN. You are not!

STROEBEL. Yes, we are. Two weeks ago the good people here founded a Society because they felt it was necessary to proceed more severely against public immorality . . .

BEERMANN. . . . Against immorality in the lower strata where it easily degenerates into licentiousness. As the President of this Society, I, at least ought to know what was intended.

STROEBBL. Even Frau Hochstetter belongs to the lower strata. If we are now stepping on anybody's corns, I am very sorry. . . .

BEERMANN. The police have no business to do anything they will be sorry for later on. Good Lord, had the Commissioner only listened to me. An affair like

this should not be treated in such a purely business-like way.

STROEBEL. The Commissioner can only tell you the same thing. He cannot change the law.

BEERMANN. Anything can be done.

STROEBEL. Not at this stage. We could probably have prevented it had we known that this case would have such far-reaching consequences, but now here are the proofs. [*Pointing to the diary.*] No one in the world can destroy them, not even the Commissioner.

BEERMANN. Then what do you propose to do with them?

STROEBEL. They are going down to the District Attorney's office. The avalanche is on its way.

BEERMANN. And we have simply to wait and watch what it hits? [*Telephone bell rings.*]

STROEBEL. Pardon me a moment.

[*Goes to the right to the telephone. While Stroebel is answering the telephone, and has his back to Beermann the latter crosses to the desk and tries to look into the diary. Timidly he opens it several times but shuts it again quickly, when he fears that Stroebel will turn around.*]

STROEBEL [*answering the telephone*]. Police Department. . . . Assessor Stroebel speaking. Who is this please . . . yes, this is Assessor Stroebel. . . . Yes, Commissioner . . . [*pause*] I understand you, I will remain in the office . . . Yes, I examined the Hochstetter woman. . . . Yes, this Madame Hauteville . . . [*pause*] I will remain in the office until you call. . . . Yes, Commissioner. Good-bye. [*He hangs up the receiver.*]

BEERMANN. [*Energetically closes the book and tries to appear indifferent.*]

STROEBEL. Now you can convince yourself, Herr

Beermann, the Commissioner himself is following up this matter. He wants to have another conference with me about it to-day.

BEERMANN. Am I to wait helplessly until the catastrophe happens?

STROEBEL. You must be consistent. . . .

BEERMANN. It is possible that my best friends, acquaintances or relatives are involved . . .

STROEBEL. You must remain consistent. Doesn't this splendidly justify the founding of your Society?

BEERMANN [*in a rage*]. Oh, leave me alone with your stupid Vice Society. Are we not all human, after all!

STROEBEL. I do not understand you.

BEERMANN. Do you realize what severe pangs of conscience I suffer? Last night as I pictured to myself all that is about to happen, all these family misfortunes, I asked myself this question: What really is morality? And . . . I could not find the answer.

STROEBEL. Although you are . . .

BEERMANN. Although I am Chairman of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, yes, sir. Then I asked myself this: which is the more important: that we are moral, or that we seem moral?

STROEBEL. Have you found the answer?

BEERMANN. I have. I have become fully convinced that it is far more important for the people to believe in our morality.

STROEBEL. But you didn't need a Society for that.

BEERMANN. Yes, we did. Just to be moral is something that I can accomplish in my room by myself, but that has no educational value. The important thing is to ally one's self publicly with moral issues. This has a beneficial effect on the family and state.

STROEBEL. I daresay that this side of the question has not occurred to me.

BEERMANN. Just consider. Morality holds exactly

the same position as religion. We must always create the impression that there is such a thing and we must make each other believe that each of us have it. Do you suppose for one moment that religion would last if the church dealt publicly with our sins? But she forgives them quietly. The State ought to be just as shrewd.

STROEBEL. Many a thing you say seems quite true.

BEERMANN. It is true, you can depend upon it.

STROEBEL. Theoretically perhaps. But that does not change it one bit. As long as the law prescribes it, these offenses [*pointing to the diary*] must be dealt with publicly.

BEERMANN. Although you know that thus public decency will be undermined. [*Stroebel shrugs his shoulders.*] Although the State will suffer by it?

STROEBEL [*again shrugs his shoulders*]. Well . . .

BEERMANN. The Administration knows very well the sort of conservative element there is in the Society for the Suppression of Vice.

STROEBEL. Yes, and values it highly.

BEERMANN. Let us suppose — I do not know if it be so — but let us just suppose that only one member of the Society once had a weak little moment and his name were in this book . . .

STROEBEL [*energetically*]. Then he would be summoned to court without regard or mercy.

BEERMANN. And the whole Society would be made ridiculous and would go up in the air.

STROEBEL [*shrugs his shoulders*]. Well . . .

BEERMANN [*shouts*]. That is the height of folly, I tell you!

STROEBEL [*instructively*]. It is the fulfilment of our duty. You are a layman. With you sentiments play an important part. We, the police, on the other hand are compelled to sacrifice our feelings to our duty.

BEERMANN [*holding his hands to his ears*]. Oh, stop that!

STROEBEL. Official duty blocks our way.

BEERMANN [*angrily*]. But even a jackass can jump over blocks.

STROEBEL [*offended*]. Herr Beermann, I did not hear that remark.

BEERMANN. Let me tell you something! Do you know what we have been doing for the past three weeks? . . . Talking ourselves hoarse in order to bring about an election friendly to the present administration. For the past three weeks it has been nothing but Fatherland, and the state and religion! And this is your gratitude! In the devil's own name — just picture it to yourself — a man who has been fighting the opposition in thirty different political meetings might be involved in this.

STROEBEL [*shrugs his shoulders*]. What can I do?

BEERMANN. Is the Administration going to deliver him over to his opponents?

STROEBEL. We would be very sorry for him, but we would have to summon him to court.

BEERMANN. Without regard or mercy —? [*Telephone bell rings loudly.*]

STROEBEL. Pardon me for a moment. [*Stroebel goes to the telephone and this time he turns completely around so that his back is toward Beermann.*] Police Department . . . yes . . . Commissioner; this is Stroebel at the telephone. . . . [*Short pause.*] When she was arrested? . . . When she was arrested there was Lieutenant Schmuttermaier and an officer. . . . [*Short pause.*] Just one policeman. . . [*Pause.*] . . . Yes, Commissioner [*short pause*] I should tell that Lieutenant [*short interruption*] jackass Schmuttermaier to come over to the office immediately. . . . [*Short pause.*] I shall wait for you until you come. . . . Yes, Commissioner.

[*During this telephone conversation Beermann steps near to the desk. With a shaking hand he takes up the diary but quickly puts it down again. Then he picks it up again and with a rapid and energetic movement puts it into his breast pocket. Stroebel with a rebuked demeanor goes from the telephone to the desk. Beermann turns around so that Stroebel cannot see his face. He is disturbed and coughs in order to hide his embarrassment. Stroebel presses a button on Reisacher's desk.*]

BEERMANN [*while coughing*]. I realize now that nothing more can be done. I shan't take up your time.

STROEBEL [*anxiously*]. No, no, please remain. The Commissioner himself will be here in a moment. Then you may talk to him.

BEERMANN. But you just told me that there was no use waiting. . . . [*Reisacher enters through center door.*]

STROEBEL [*urgently to Reisacher*]. Reisacher, go and look for Lieutenant Schmuttermaier immediately. If he is not in the building, send to his home or telephone for him. Leave word that he must come over immediately.

REISACHER. Yes, Herr Assessor.

[*Goes out quickly through center door.*]

BEERMANN. You said yourself that there would be no use. I guess I'd better go.

STROEBEL [*perturbed*]. But do wait for the Commissioner.

BEERMANN. There is no use in my waiting. I . . . I did all I could . . . there seems to be no use . . . well then. . . . Good-bye!

[*About to go through door on left but the door is*

quickly opened and the Commissioner appears with Baron Schmettau. The former holds the door open for the Baron. After they have come in, he shuts the door.]

COMMISSIONER [*to the Baron*]. If you please, Herr Baron. . . . [*To Beermann*]. Ah . . . here is our President of the Society for the Suppression of Vice. [*Beermann bows slightly — Commissioner continuing contemptuously.*] Well, have you accomplished your mission? [*Beermann nods.*] Are you satisfied with this arrest or would you like to have us do more? [*Angrily.*] Once for all, Sir, I forbid you to meddle with the affairs of this office. You can preach your principles wherever else you like, but here I will stand for no interference. [*Beermann timidly creeps along the wall, and bows himself out.*] [*Commissioner to Baron Schmettau.*] Whenever the police bungle anything, look for reformers.

SCHMETTAU [*with a glance at Stroebel*]. Will you introduce me?

COMMISSIONER. Assessor Stroebel,— Freiherr von Schmettau, Adjutant to his Highness, Prince Emil. [*Stroebel clicks his heels together and bows deeply. Schmettau thanks him curtly.*]

COMMISSIONER [*sharply*]. Herr Assessor, I have asked Herr Baron Schmettau to come with me in order that in his presence I might correct a pitiable lack of tact, which to my regret, and contrary to all my intentions, was perpetrated by Lieutenant Schmuttermaier.

SCHMETTAU. It was abominable.

COMMISSIONER. What orders did that man have?

STROEBEL [*nervously*]. Do you mean in the case of Hochstetter, Commissioner?

COMMISSIONER. Yes, sir, Madame de Hauteville. Who made the raid on her apartment?

STROEBEL. The raid?

COMMISSIONER. I hope before you arrested her you informed yourself exactly with whom you were dealing.

STROEBEL. Certainly . . .

COMMISSIONER. . . . And the result?

STROEBEL. I ascertained that this woman was violating public decency.

COMMISSIONER. I am going to ask you, Assessor, as my inferior in office, to confine yourself to more direct answers, *please*. What did the investigation disclose?

STROEBEL. That she received questionable visits from gentlemen.

COMMISSIONER. Questionable? Then does Schmuttermaier know who these gentlemen were?

STROEBEL. He does not . . .

COMMISSIONER. No? Didn't he investigate a matter which seemed so questionable to him?

STROEBEL. He just wanted to ascertain that these visits were meant for Hauteville.

COMMISSIONER. So —? I have some truly competent officials. And who and what it was did not bother the man at all?

STROEBEL. I myself thought that that would be found out later.

COMMISSIONER. There are certain things in the world you would not be likely to look for and less likely to find. You have been treating this thing as though you were dealing with a common ordinary pickpocket. [*To Baron Schmettau.*] You see it is just as I told you . . . the man did not have the slightest idea. . . . [*To Stroebel.*] Did this fellow, Schmuttermaier, see anyone in the flat or did he hear if anyone was there?

STROEBEL. No, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER [*to Baron Schmettau*]. It is just as I told you. . . .

STROEBEL. Furthermore, I have heard since that there was somebody in the apartment.

COMMISSIONER [*quickly*]. Who?

STROEBEL. That, I have been unable to find out yet, but Hauteville made several insinuations as though someone had been hidden in a wardrobe.

COMMISSIONER [*to Baron Schmettau*]. To be sure — someone — was — To my profoundest regret, His Highness, our beloved Hereditary Prince Emil.

STROEBEL [*crushed*]. I . . . didn't have the slightest idea . . .

COMMISSIONER. You people ought to have an idea once in a while. If this Schmuttermaier had any ability, it would not have happened. But it is the old story, not a trace of independent ability and tact.

STROEBEL. I don't know what apology I can offer.

COMMISSIONER. Neither do I. Besides Herr Baron Schmettau himself was obliged to go through this very unpleasant incident.

SCHMETTAU. [*Schmettau speaks very precisely but puts a slight emphasis on his s.*] I was completely dumfounded. I cannot understand how it could happen. Just picture it . . . Lord knows . . . I was and am of the opinion that our young Highness must learn to know life. Faith, it is not my business to act as his pastor. . . .

COMMISSIONER. If you please, Herr Baron, that goes without saying. . . .

SCHMETTAU. That of course is merely my opinion. I am a man of the world and of affairs. I consider it fitting that his Highness should learn to know life. . . .

COMMISSIONER. But I entirely share your opinion.

SCHMETTAU. A moment ago the word "decency" was used. In my position I can listen to such words from the pulpit, but outside of the church I deem them entirely out of place.

COMMISSIONER [*to Assessor*]. You used that expression.

SCHMETTAU. If anyone wants to claim that my bearing is not a proper one, he will have to prove it with a revolver in his hand.

STROEBEL. I did not think that the word would offend you.

SCHMETTAU. It did offend me. Such expressions are fitting in an asylum for feeble-minded people. They should never be used to characterize the recreation of Cavaliers.

COMMISSIONER. May I put in a good word for my Assessor? It certainly was not his intention to offend you.

SCHMETTAU. It was not his intention. [*To the Assessor.*] Then I will assume that it was never said. [*The Assessor clicks his heels.*] I am somewhat nettled but you cannot be surprised at that. You can imagine with what care I undertook this task. This Madame de Hauteville was recommended to me by reliable parties. She has good manners and does not talk.

COMMISSIONER. In her way, she certainly seems a very decent person.

SCHMETTAU. Absolutely. Since it was my belief that His Highness must learn to know life, I could not find a better place. [*To the Commissioner.*] We understand each other?

COMMISSIONER. Certainly.

SCHMETTAU. Every guarantee against vulgarity; everything tip-top. Now picture it to yourself. I do all a man possibly can and this inconceivably awful scandal happens.

COMMISSIONER. It is the old story. These people have no tact.

SCHMETTAU. That doesn't help me any. I am not trying to mix in your business. That never occurred to

me. But this does not help me one bit. The whole blame attaches to me. I simply will be told that such things should not have happened. That is an unheard of business.

COMMISSIONER [*to Assessor*]. For which you are to blame.

SCHMETTAU. Had I a suspicion that this was contemplated, I would have informed you.

COMMISSIONER. If you only had!

SCHMETTAU. Who would think of such things? We all take it for granted that the police first of all respect protection!

STROEBEL. On my word of honor, Herr Baron. Not even in my dreams did I think of an occurrence like this.

SCHMETTAU [*squares his shoulders*]. Is it so difficult for you to think?

COMMISSIONER. That's just what I say. If a man knows his work thoroughly these things come to him. But people who are interested in the uplift movements are always in the clouds.

SCHMETTAU. This Lieutenant or whatever that fellow was, behaved as though he was collecting material for a socialist newspaper. His Highness was hardly in the house five minutes when there was a loud ringing. Then someone in heavy shoes ran up against the door like a drunken sailor. Madame de Hauteville breaks into the room and cries, "Your Highness, how unfortunate I am. The police are here," she says. "Leave them alone," I say, "they will go away presently." "Impossible," she says, "I can never permit His Highness to be found by the police in my place. I will take the blame upon myself entirely." Fancy the tact of that woman! "Impossible," she says, "that His Highness should be caught in my place."

COMMISSIONER. Really, very decent!

SCHMETTAU. Indeed it is. Immediately it dawns

on me that she is right. The situation is getting terrible. That policeman is likely to demand His Highness' identification. What shall we do? Madame says, "For Heaven's sake hide in the wardrobe!" Outside, that fool is making quite a rumpus. He knocks, rings, shouts and barks. The neighborhood is getting aroused and heads are popping out from right and left and in the midst of this terrible commotion, there we stand — Highness and I. What shall we do? A few moments later, His Highness is cramped beside me in the wardrobe, in between different pieces of woman's apparel. With great difficulty we are able to draw our breath.

STROEBEL. If I had only had an inkling about it.

COMMISSIONER [*angrily*]. The police are expected to grasp conditions.

SCHMETTAU. Then what followed? In heavy-nailed shoes the men go from room to room. Doors are opened and slammed. The fellows use loud and coarse language, and three or four times they stand in front of the wardrobe. Upon my word, I actually feel how His Highness is perspiring. Just picture to yourself the situation if that brute had opened the closet! Just picture that and you can realize how much courage I had!

COMMISSIONER. You must have suffered terribly.

SCHMETTAU. What I suffered does not matter. In such moments one does not think of anything else but Highness. What an outrage! Finally the steps disappear. Madame Hauteville, who throughout behaved most decently and whose conduct was above reproach, is led away and Highness and I can leave the wardrobe where we spent an entire twenty minutes. And now I ask again, "How can such mistakes happen?"

COMMISSIONER [*to Assessor*]. You shall find the answer to this.

SCHMETTAU. Up-stairs the woman is still in her cell. The newspapers are full of the scandal, and Highness

suffers agonies when he realizes the possibilities which can develop at any moment.

COMMISSIONER. Herr Baron, you need not worry any longer. Now I am taking the matter entirely into my hands. [*Consulting his watch, he speaks with affected calmness.*] It is now a quarter to one. This evening at eight o'clock Madame de Hauteville will be set free and everything will be so arranged that her discharge will arouse no suspicion.

STROEBEL. But how are you going to do it . . . ?

COMMISSIONER. The details of this arrangement are your affair.

CURTAIN

ACT III

Beermann's library. Elegantly furnished. A desk is backed up against a large bay-window on the right. Opposite is a large book-case, and next to this a sofa. A long double door with small French panes somewhat to the left. On the left of stage a small table and a few comfortable leather chairs. On the right a simple door.

Beermann enters through the middle door. He goes to the desk, unlocks a drawer and takes out the diary of Hauteville. He looks carefully about him, then picks out a volume of an encyclopedia from the book-case, opens it quickly and places the diary inside. He seats himself and begins to read. At this moment the center door is opened slowly, and Frau Beermann stands on the threshold.

FRAU BEERMANN. Are you alone, Fritz?

BEERMANN [*frightened, slams the book so that the diary is concealed in it*]. Goodness, you did frighten me!

FRAU BEERMANN. I did not know how nervous you were until yesterday.

BEERMANN. Oh, what, nervous? I am over-worked and irritable. Every single day, I have to prepare a new speech.

FRAU BEERMANN. Is it in that work that I disturbed you? Pardon me.

BEERMANN. Do you want anything?

FRAU BEERMANN. I just wanted to have a few serious words with you.

BEERMANN. But not necessarily at this moment. To-morrow or . . .

EFFIE [*opening the glass door, calls in*]. Oh, papa, did you forget?

BEERMANN [*uneasily*]. Forget what?

EFFIE [*entering*]. Weren't we to see the Indian dancer to-day?

BEERMANN. Well, it can't be done to-day.

EFFIE. That's a shame; I wanted so much to see her and to-night is her last appearance.

BEERMANN. Then we will wait until the next one comes along.

EFFIE. I don't see why just we have to have this bad luck.

BEERMANN [*with emphasis*]. Because I have more important things to do than to watch your hop, skip and jump.

EFFIE [*jolly*]. Oh, aren't you cranky?

BEERMANN. I am not at all disposed for such nonsense.

EFFIE [*going over to the desk, picks up the volume of the encyclopedia.*] All this comes from your politics; now I will simply confiscate your ammunition.

BEERMANN [*excited*]. Give me that book.

EFFIE [*jumping away*]. No, no, papa, you will only get sick.

BEERMANN [*shouts*]. I forbid these stupid jokes. Put that book down.

FRAU BEERMANN. What is the matter?

BEERMANN. I never could tolerate disobedient children, that's all.

EFFIE [*placing the book on the desk*]. Oh, pardon me, papa.

BEERMANN [*grasps the volume tightly and places it in the book-case*]. All fooling has its limits; don't forget that.

EFFIE. Now I suppose as a punishment, we can't see the dancer.

BEERMANN. Really I would rather go with you than — sit here, but it is absolutely impossible.

FRAU BEERMANN. Go now, darling; I must talk to papa alone.

BEERMANN. But I haven't the time.

FRAU BEERMANN [*positively*]. That much of it you have.

EFFIE. Good-bye, papa dear. [*Goes out.*]

FRAU BEERMANN. [*Seats herself on the sofa next to the book-case. Beermann stands leaning with his back against the desk. Through the large window the evening sun can be seen so that Beermann's face is in its light, while Frau Beermann sits in the half-dusk.*]

BEERMANN. Lena dear, do we really have . . . ?

FRAU BEERMANN. We do.

BEERMANN. Can't it be postponed?

FRAU BEERMANN. I have postponed it many a year, but now it is high time.

BEERMANN [*disturbed*]. Many a year? What are you referring to?

FRAU BEERMANN. I have a request to make to you.

BEERMANN. With pleasure. . . .

FRAU BEERMANN. Don't make a laughing-stock of your family.

BEERMANN. In what way?

FRAU BEERMANN. Don't make a laughing stock of your family, I beg you.

BEERMANN. Please don't talk in riddles.

FRAU BEERMANN. These are not very great riddles to you.

BEERMANN. Speak plainly, won't you?

FRAU BEERMANN. No. I am not going to speak more plainly.

BEERMANN. As your husband, I demand it.

FRAU BEERMANN. N-no.

BEERMANN. That is very sad. There should be no secrets at all between husband and wife.

FRAU BEERMANN. Is this a principle again? Fancy all these great secrets! [*Beermann shrugs his shoulders.*] No. Now take it for granted that I know a thing or two about you.

BEERMANN [*with anxiety*]. You?

FRAU BEERMANN. Several things. Some which you must know only too well. After all, that principle of yours has not been violated. There remain no secrets whatever between us.

BEERMANN. I assure you I shall not rack my brains about it.

FRAU BEERMANN. Nor would I want you to regard me as sitting in judgment on your acts.

BEERMANN [*with a false pathos*]. Instead of telling me freely and frankly of the gossip you have heard about me; then I could defend myself.

FRAU BEERMANN. That is just what I want to avoid. To me it appears somewhat childish when a man tries to justify . . .

BEERMANN [*just as before*]. In this manner, the lowest gossip can destroy the happiness of any family.

FRAU BEERMANN [*seriously*]. Fritz, really, there is no one listening to us just now.

BEERMANN. You are not taking me in earnest.

FRAU BEERMANN. No, and it is our good fortune that I am not. At least, my good fortune.

BEERMANN. You call that good fortune? I might have expected something different from you.

FRAU BEERMANN. No, sir, you did not. If you will be honest with me, you will admit that. This many a year, we have been playing a common farce. You acted the true Christian head of the family and I the all-believing audience.

BEERMANN. How nice!

FRAU BEERMANN. Not nice but it's true. Perhaps the fault is not entirely ours, for we learned it from our parents. You men are supposed to impress us with your greatness and we women are to stand by and admire.

BEERMANN. Do you find that impossible?

FRAU BEERMANN. Even the best Christian family principles must have some foundation. What was I supposed to admire?

BEERMANN. You ask that now?

FRAU BEERMANN. Perhaps I gave it up sooner than others. But that is due to our relationship. We were always together. Where is a man to get pose and character enough to last him for twenty-four hours every day?

BEERMANN. So that is about your conception of our married life?

FRAU BEERMANN. That is it exactly.

BEERMANN. And after all the years . . .

FRAU BEERMANN. I acquired it rather early.

BEERMANN. Now, after twenty-six years you declare that you are unhappy.

FRAU BEERMANN. No, Fritz, it has not led us to unhappiness. There has been no sudden shattering of an ideal. Our marriage was not an ideal and . . . don't feel offended . . . your personality was never so immaculate, that one stain more or less would spoil the effect.

BEERMANN [*excited*]. But there must be some sort of reason back of all these reproaches?

FRAU BEERMANN. If you think them reproaches, then we do not understand each other.

BEERMANN. What else are they?

FRAU BEERMANN. I meant it merely as a request. Do not bring your family into ridicule.

BEERMANN. You are playing hide and seek all the time. In what way am I likely to do that?

FRAU BEERMANN. With your moral priesthood to which you have absolutely no right.

BEERMANN. No right?

FRAU BEERMANN. Not the slightest one. But you are creating enemies who will make a laughing-stock of us all, if they find out certain things. Those things can be found out whether we like it or not.

BEERMANN [*forced laughter*]. Lena dear, I believe you are jealous.

FRAU BEERMANN [*quietly*]. Jealous, of what? [*Short pause.*] I hope that you credit me with at least good taste enough not to be jealous of my so-called right, and . . . otherwise what can I lose? No, Fritz, I am not jealous. [*Short pause, it is getting darker.*] I had to get accustomed to it; that's true. This secrecy, the petty lies and the false gravity irritated me a little bit too much at first, but I made an effort so that I could still retain a feeling of comradeship. I overcame it daily, because — well because I never really took you seriously. [*Pause.*]

BEERMANN [*with a false pathos*]. Lena, dear, do you realize what things you are saying?

FRAU BEERMANN. Yes, fully.

BEERMANN [*as above*]. That is dreadful. Every word is a . . . catastrophe! I have until today, I have until this hour, believed in our established quiet happiness. Now shall all this pass away?

FRAU BEERMANN. Nothing but your confidence in my blindness shall pass away.

BEERMANN. Think it over. There can be no real family life after people lose faith in each other.

FRAU BEERMANN. Oh, a person gets used even to that.

BEERMANN. No. Lena, listen. Someone has been telling you tales and I cannot defend myself, because I don't know what I am accused of. You must tell me everything right now. I demand it of you.

FRAU BEERMANN. If I wanted to do that, I would have to begin "many, many years ago. . . ."

BEERMANN. Well, why didn't you do it then?

FRAU BEERMANN. You can well understand, I had my reasons.

BEERMANN. For such silence there can be no reasons.

FRAU BEERMANN. I could shut my eyes and remain silent. That was my privilege. But if I had spoken out and permitted you to appease me . . . no, that was something beyond me. To do that I would have been obliged to lie and for that I, for one, have not the ability. [*Beermann makes a motion.*] No, do not interrupt me. These things will have no consequences as long as I do not wish them to, but if I should name them, then they would have.

BEERMANN. Then shall I let this suspicion rest upon me?

FRAU BEERMANN. Yes.

BEERMANN. How coldly you speak. If what you suspect were true, you could not be so indifferent about it.

FRAU BEERMANN. Do the by-laws of your society prescribe that in cases like these the wife shall be unhappy?

BEERMANN. Imagine! The many years that you and I have lived together and you had these suspicions right along and never said a word about them. Why do you speak to-day?

FRAU BEERMANN. Because you have reached the point where our friendship for one another may break. Everything I see and hear from you now hurts me. You speak in a tone of strictness, which must be unpleasant even to you. For weeks past there has been nothing around me but lies. What you say to me, all that you say to the children, and what you preached here

publicly last night. Every word hurts my ears and urges me to contradict you; I am silent and by doing that I endorse your lies.

BEERMANN. But, Lena . . .

FRAU BEERMANN. Finally when your every glance is artificial, each motion of yours is a pose. Then it is unbearable. Add to that my anxiety for our children. How shall they still retain faith in us, if through an accident their eyes are opened? I had remained silent all this time for their sake and now you are inviting the whole world to speak. I cannot continue to live this life of worry and hypocrisy. All that I have already overcome awakens again and appears to me more ugly than ever before. I do not know if I can still believe in your good fellowship and remain your friend. [*She rises and goes slowly to the door.*]

BEERMANN. I do not seem to know you any more. During our entire married life, you have not spoken as seriously as in the last fifteen minutes.

FRAU BEERMANN. That perhaps was my great mistake. But I have paid for it. [*She opens the door.*]

BEERMANN. Lena dear, have you nothing further to tell me?

FRAU BEERMANN. I just beg of you; do not bring your family into ridicule. [*Exit.*]

BEERMANN. [*For a while remains standing; lost in thought; then he turns on the electric light, sighing, goes over to the book-case, takes out the volume of the encyclopedia wherein the diary of Madame de Hauteville is hidden, opens it and reads standing. A knock on the door. Frightened, he quickly hides the diary in his side pocket.*]

BEERMANN. Come in. [*Justizrat Hauser enters on the left.*]

HAUSER. Lord; good evening.

BEERMANN [*hurrying toward him*]. Lord; how glad I am that you have come.

HAUSER. Has anything happened?

BEERMANN. N . . . no.

HAUSER. I received your message that you must see me tonight without fail.

BEERMANN. Yes, I was at your house twice.

HAUSER. Unfortunately, I was not there. [*He has taken off his overcoat and is laying it on a chair.*] Tell me, you seem to me all upset.

BEERMANN. I am upset.

HAUSER. I suppose that is why you sent for me. Well, then, what is it?

BEERMANN. Have a seat, please. [*They sit down to the left on the sofa.*] I must begin a little way back. . . . Have a cigar? [*He goes over to the humidor, takes out a box of cigars and offers it to Hauser, who takes one.*] I must begin a little way back. . . . Can you remember the subject we discussed last night?

HAUSER. The genuinely righteous moral life? [*He lights his cigar.*] Of course, I remember it. Such sermons are not easily forgotten.

BEERMANN. Do you know I got the impression that you have a rather liberal viewpoint.

HAUSER. Liberal?

BEERMANN. I mean that you are not a prude.

HAUSER. I am an old lawyer, you know, and just out of sheer habit contradict people. I made myself blacker than I actually am. So, if you have scruples on my account . . .

BEERMANN. I merely mentioned it because you understand life and I must speak to someone who judges more liberally than our narrow minded *bourgeois*.

HAUSER. More liberally than you judged last night?

BEERMANN. I was overzealous, but don't let us talk about it. I want to ask you for advice. [*Short pause.*] You lawyers are bound to respect professional secrets?

HAUSER. We must respect them.

BEERMANN. What I am about to tell you, you will probably find most astounding, but it is to be considered absolutely confidential. Even though your client confesses a crime, you are not permitted to divulge the information?

HAUSER. What a careful criminal you are!

BEERMANN. It is possible that you will find this information most unpleasant.

HAUSER. [*Bends and talks in a low voice*]. Now don't worry about me, Beermann. I will know how to protect your interests. The law gives me the right to remain silent in any event.

BEERMANN. Well then . . . [*nervously runs his fingers through his hair*] I really have to begin a little way back. The last few days I have been thinking a great deal about monogamy. I am surely the last person to doubt the high moral value of the marriage vow, but there is something to be said on the other side. It is indeed a very ticklish theme to discuss.

HAUSER. Suppose then that we skip the prologue and the few opening chapters and start at once with the affair of Madame Hauteville.

BEERMANN. How do you know . . . ?

HAUSER. I suspected. You probably are not the first one who has come to confess to me. Since last night many consciences have been jolted. So you, too, belong to that crowd?

BEERMANN. You ask yourself how such things are possible?

HAUSER. No, sir, I never ask myself such stupid questions.

BEERMANN. You have always believed that an undisturbed happiness prevailed in my family.

HAUSER [*quickly*]. Beermann, I resent that! Do not try to make yourself interesting.

BEERMANN. Don't take it the wrong way. I am not blaming anybody. I just want to . . .

HAUSER. You even want to find moral justification for your immorality.

BEERMANN. I know well enough that it is unjustifiable. I have been saying that to myself a hundred thousand times. Do not think that I overcame my principles so easily.

HAUSER. All you had to overcome was your timidity.

BEERMANN [*sighing deeply*]. If you only knew.

HAUSER. Of course you did not land on the primrose path with both feet, but you climbed carefully over the fence — just as befits a man of your *embonpoint.*

BEERMANN. I expected something better from you than mere mocking.

HAUSER. What do you want me to do? Shall I weep because you have sinned? Why? What good would it do you? That is the way of your kind. As long as no one has proofs against you, your virtue must always be under the spotlight, but the very minute you trip up, some peculiar background of justification ought to be invented for the smallest sin. No, my dear friend. The world's moral system will not go to pieces just because you slipped and broke your nose.

BEERMANN. You cannot realize what suffering you are inflicting upon me right now.

HAUSER. Now please don't make long speeches. You did not call me here to grant you absolution. You want me to help you to quash this affair.

BEERMANN [*jumps up quickly from his chair*]. Yes, you must do that. Good Lord, I beg you. I am in a

terrible position. You have not the slightest idea how nervous I am.

HAUSER. Will you please sit down and stop exaggerating?

BEERMANN [*sits down*]. No man living can have sufficient imagination to enlarge on this. Imagine it! Any moment the police are likely to come here and arrest me.

HAUSER [*seriously*]. Have you been carrying on so badly at Hauteville's?

BEERMANN. No. Not there. That is not worth while mentioning.

HAUSER. Why then do you fear the police? That's all nonsense. Now just consider everything quietly and calmly. By the way, has your wife any suspicions . . . ?

BEERMANN. Of this affair? I don't think so. She has just a general one . . . but what's the use of bothering with trifles! You know that this stupid woman kept a diary, and that they found it in her apartment.

HAUSER. Assuredly I know it. Without that diary we would not have so many penitents in the City.

BEERMANN. Imagine my position. I know positively that my name is in that book. It means that I am simply done for by the cursed thing.

HAUSER. Is it so certain that your name is in the book?

BEERMANN [*loudly*]. Yes, sir.

HAUSER. It may be possible that . . .

BEERMANN. It is not at all possible. My name is there. Shall I quietly sit and wait until I am ruined? You know that I would be ruined if it became public. Fancy, I, the candidate for the Reichstag; I, the President of the Society for the Suppression of Vice! All the papers would be full of it.

HAUSER. Oh, yes, it would be quite interesting.

BEERMANN. Then think of the consequences here in the City! In the family! Why, I would be killed outright! Lord, how I tried to hammer it into the head of that stupid man in the Police Department so he could understand what terrible mischief this will make.

HAUSER [*frightened*]. You went to Police Headquarters?

BEERMANN. Of course, I was there.

HAUSER. Did you confess?

BEERMANN. How can you suppose that? [*Sits down again.*] I spoke for the others. I explained to the official that he is showing up the influential element; that he is injuring the established order of society,—but [*he touches his forehead with his palm*] that fellow has nothing but police ordinances in his head.

HAUSER. Shouting will not help us a bit. Remain cool and collected. One thing is important, at this moment. Has the diary reached the District Attorney's office?

BEERMANN. No, it has not.

HAUSER. Well, as long as it remains in the Police Department there are still possibilities.

BEERMANN. It is not in the Police Department either.

HAUSER. Of course it is there. Where else should it be?

BEERMANN [*indicating his side pocket*]. Here.

HAUSER [*amazed*]. What?

BEERMANN [*takes the diary out of his side pocket and places it on the table*]. Here it is.

HAUSER. So, this is the celebrated diary of Madame Hauteville. [*Beermann nods.*] Who gave it to you?

BEERMANN. Nobody. I just took it.

HAUSER. You mean; you sto . . .

BEERMANN. . . . Stole it, yes, sir.

HAUSER [*pulls back his chair and breaks into a loud laugh*]. You did that! [*He laughs.*] . . . Say, that's pretty good. Now I am beginning to respect you. Confound it, I would never have given you credit for a stunt like this. [*He laughs and slaps his knee.*]

BEERMANN. Laugh, while I am dying of fright.

HAUSER. Don't spoil my good impression of you! I am on the point of admiring you. [*He laughs again.*] Let me apologize. I always held you as a wishy-washy *bourgeois* and now you go and pull this thing off.

BEERMANN. You had better give me some advice. I have not had a quiet moment since I took the book. I want to destroy it but how can I? If I tear it up the pieces will be found.

HAUSER. Burn it.

BEERMANN. Where? There is no fire in the house, except in the kitchen range. If I hide it, I shall always have to run to and fro to see if it is there, and I feel less safe if I have it on my person. Then I have always a feeling as though that thing were bulging out my pocket; and the police must be missing it by this time.

HAUSER. Oh, tear out the page on which your name appears and send it back anonymously.

BEERMANN. Impossible. My name appears on almost every second page.

HAUSER. Oh . . . so.

BEERMANN. What shall I do when the police ask me for the book?

HAUSER. There is only one way; you know nothing about it.

BEERMANN. But they will be dead certain that I have it.

HAUSER. Remain firm. For Heaven's sake don't fall into the trap that by confessing you will improve this fine job. [*A loud and prolonged ringing of the electric bell is heard.*]

BEERMANN [*frightened, exclaims*]. There, do you hear that?

HAUSER. Some visitor, I suppose.

BEERMANN. This is no time to make visits. [*Anxiously picking up the diary.*] What shall I do with that damned thing? [*Takes out a volume of the encyclopedia and wants to hide the diary in it but hesitates, and then puts the volume back on the shelf.*] Lord, where shall I put it?

HAUSER. Come, give it to me.

BEERMANN. [*Gives him the book and Hauser puts it in his side pocket.*]

HAUSER. No one will search me for it.

BEERMANN. Stay here with me . . . please.

HAUSER. If it gives you any pleasure, yes; but man alive, pull yourself together. Suppose it really were the police; you are trembling all over. [*A knock on the door.*]

BEERMANN [*crouching*]. Quiet now. [*Another knock.*] Come in. [*Betty comes in from the left and hands Beermann a visiting card.*]

BETTY. The gentleman says it is very urgent.

BEERMANN [*with a trembling hand Beermann takes up the visiting card and reads*]. Professor Wasner. [*He sighs audibly and then says with forced vigor.*] Show the gentleman up. [*Betty exit.*]

BEERMANN. And this has been my state of mind for the past six hours.

HAUSER [*offering him his hand*]. Now be brave, my dear friend, and even if they should come to you, just deny it outright. You'll know how to lie. A man of such rare abilities. . . . Good night. [*Goes out on the left. In the doorway, he almost collides with Professor Wasner. They greet each other.*]

WASNER [*wears a cape the left corner thrown picturesquely over his right shoulder, holds a large slouch hat in his hand. His hair is disheveled. His flaxen beard*

falls on his chest]. I am here in regard to the most remarkable matter a man ever came to consult another about.

BEERMANN [*very nervous*]. Must it be to-day, Herr Professor?

WASNER. The situation permits of no delay.

BEERMANN. But it is getting so late.

WASNER. I admit that this is hardly the proper time to make visits. Nevertheless, I entreat you to hear me. [*Beermann seats himself at the desk, takes out a large handkerchief and presses it against his forehead. Wasner remains standing and continues.*] For many years, as you well know, I undertook the task of collecting all publications which have been undermining public morals. I daresay to-day, that my collection is most complete and that I have unquestionably proven the harm of pornographic literature. What corrupting influence this temptation has through suggestion and imagination can to-day no longer be doubted, because — [*an impressive pause; Wasner lowers his voice*] — I myself fell a victim to it. [*Beermann remains in his apathetic attitude. Pause.*] I can well understand that you lack words. I, too, became, on account of it, much disgusted with my character. I asked myself if I still have the right to participate in the moral salvation of our people and I have decided affirmatively only after a thorough examination. [*Pause.*]

BEERMANN [*absentmindedly*]. Yes . . . yes . . . Herr Professor.

WASNER. You are entitled to know everything. Only spare me the details. Briefly stated, one day I could not view my collection as objectively as usual and thru a friend I was induced to make a most damnable visit. I assure you that I simply loathe that fellow.

BEERMANN. But just why are you telling me all this?

WASNER. Because together we have fought against immorality shoulder to shoulder. I ask you if you still deem me worthy to strive for our common ideal.

BEERMANN. For my part, go as far as you like, I won't stop you.

WASNER. Then you will not deny me your assistance?

BEERMANN. Suppose we discuss all this to-morrow, Herr Professor?

WASNER. To-morrow will be too late. [*Beermann falls back into his chair in an attitude of apathy.*] After my false step I became convinced that it is my duty to protect others from this temptation. My feeling of duty became stronger until finally I wrote a letter to be exact — an anonymous letter — to the police, wherein I demanded emphatically that they put an end to the misconduct of this person.

BEERMANN [*now attentive.*] Really that was not nice.

WASNER. I wanted to assure myself that within I still had the right to belong to the Society for the Suppression of Vice.

BEERMANN. I consider that rather mean. You should always be grateful.

WASNER. This very feeling would have made me feel still more guilty. [*Beermann shrugs his shoulders nervously.*] But now I come to the reason for my being here. My information had results . . . This creature was arrested and to-day after dinner my false friend comes to tell me that he had not been careful, had mentioned to her my name, and I am certainly indexed in the book she kept. This book was found in her place by the police.

BEERMANN [*jumping up*]. What's her name?

WASNER. Hauteville.

BEERMANN. So, it is you to whom we are indebted

for this scandal. [*Angrily.*] Do you fully realize what you have accomplished? How many respectable fathers of families you have brought to the very verge of despair?

WASNER. I know it.

BEERMANN. You don't.

WASNER. I came here for that very reason.

BEERMANN [*not understanding him*]. What?

WASNER. I came here to request you on behalf of the others to call to-night, a meeting of the Executive Committee. The Society must do everything in its power to keep this case out of court.

BEERMANN. Why the devil did you write that anonymous letter?

WASNER. Listen to me, I beg of you. Someone is involved in this who is very dear to you. As soon as I received the information, I hastened to Police Headquarters immediately and wanted to intervene there as the representative of the Society for the Suppression of Vice. But when I mentioned that name I was very formally thrown out. On the steps, whom do you think I met but our mutual friend, Kommerzienrat Bolland! He too had been in the Commissioner's office and had the same bad luck. I told him my troubles and he admitted to me that he also had been lured into the den of this Siren.

BEERMANN. Kommerzienrat!

WASNER. Unfortunately. But that is something I can't at all account for. He hardly could have been led into temptation through a collection of documentary exhibits.

BEERMANN. And what do you want of me now?

WASNER. Our friend sends me to you. He would have come himself but the shock threw him into a sickbed. He entreats you urgently to call a meeting of the Executive Committee, immediately. We have very in-

fluential people in our midst who must bring pressure to bear on the Department of the Interior in order to hush up this affair.

BEERMANN. If only you had not written that anonymous letter.

WASNER. I felt a moral duty to do it.

BEERMANN. And now it is our moral duty to patch up this matter. [*Betty enters on the left.*]

BETTY [*hands Beermann a calling card*]. The gentleman says it is very urgent.

BEERMANN [*reads*]. "Assessor Stroebel." [*Frightened; to Betty.*] Tell him I am out of town. [*Betty about to leave.*] No, tell him I am sick — or, Betty, show the gentleman up. [*Betty goes out.*]

WASNER. At what time shall the Executive Committee meet?

BEERMANN [*excited*]. Oh, leave me alone with your Executive Committee.

WASNER. You must not desert us in our hour of peril. A leader's fate is bound up with his followers according to German tradition.

BEERMANN [*as before*]. It is all your fault anyway.

WASNER. Shall I then tell our sick friend that we cannot count on your support?

BEERMANN. If I am so situated that I can, I will be over to see him in an hour. I can't promise you more now. [*Assessor Stroebel enters on left and remains standing in the doorway.*]

STROEBEL [*very seriously.*] Herr Beermann, I must speak to you privately.

BEERMANN [*confused*]. You — with me? Well, since you must, I suppose you must.

WASNER. Well, I am going. [*Wasner exit left.*] *Stroebel enters. Wasner remains standing on the threshold.*] The Executive Committee will be called to

the sick bed of our friend. We shall await our chairman. [*He goes. Stroebel and Beermann remain standing, silent, facing each other.*]

STROEBEL. You are surprised, I presume, that I come here at this unusual hour.

BEERMANN. Why should I be surprised?

STROEBEL. You will have to pardon me. The matter which brings me here is unusual and urgent.

BEERMANN. Oh, don't mention it. [*A short pause. They both clear their throats.*]

STROEBEL. You were in my office this morning . . .

BEERMANN. Was I?

STROEBEL. Why, of course you were in my office this morning.

BEERMANN. Oh, yes, yes. I remember we had a short conference. I must ask you to excuse me, Herr Assessor. I am suffering with an awful ringing in the ears. It makes me so forgetful.

STROEBEL. But I hope you still remember what we spoke about.

BEERMANN. Very dimly. If you would remind me of it perhaps it will not be so difficult.

STROEBEL. You came on account of the Hauteville case.

BEERMANN. So-o?

STROEBEL. Or the Hochstetter . . .

BEERMANN. Well, since you say so, it must be so.

STROEBEL. First I thought you came to express your satisfaction that we had caught this person . . .

BEERMANN. No, that was not my purpose.

STROEBEL. I am sure it wasn't. I was quite surprised that you were not satisfied with her arrest.

BEERMANN. Why shouldn't I not be satisfied with her arrest?

STROEBEL [*nervously*]. But, Herr Beermann, you will recollect how we discussed the diary.

BEERMANN [*quickly*]. A diary? I know nothing about it.

STROEBEL. You even became quite excited about it.

BEERMANN. I know nothing whatever of any diary. You never showed me any book at all. Of that I am very positive.

STROEBEL [*in despair*]. It is just my confounded luck to find you in this predicament. You are evidently suffering.

BEERMANN. An awful ringing in my ears —

STROEBEL. I would leave you at once if the least delay were possible. But I simply must speak to you about it to-night. Can't you get relief by taking medicine?

BEERMANN. No medicine can help me. I can only tell you that I do not know anything about any diary.

STROEBEL. Lord, Lord, leave the diary out of it altogether. It is absolutely of no importance.

BEERMANN. It is of no importance?

STROEBEL. Of course, it is safely locked in my desk . . .

BEERMANN. Is that so? Well, then I can't understand why you hurried to see me to-night.

STROEBEL [*very embarrassed*]. But that is exactly what I wanted to explain to you. But how shall I do it? You scarcely remember any more than that you were in my office this morning. It is incredible how misfortune has been persecuting me since noon.

BEERMANN [*greatly relieved*]. Well, calm yourself, Herr Assessor. It will come out right in the end.

STROEBEL [*downcast*]. No, it can never come out right.

BEERMANN [*soothingly*]. Sit down nicely in this chair — so! I'll sit next to you here — so! . . . And

now let us see about it. [*They seat themselves on the left, upstage.*] Do you know, I am beginning to feel much better already. So the diary is in your desk.

STROEBEL. For my part, let it be buried a thousand feet deep. For God's sake, don't talk of it any more. It takes us away from my subject.

BEERMANN. That's right. We shan't talk of it any more. Now let me see, I called on you about the Hauteville case. . . .

STROEBEL. And on this occasion you demanded that the police suppress the matter.

BEERMANN. Quite true, I did that.

STROEBEL. There you are! And that's why I thought you were mostly interested in avoiding scandal.

BEERMANN. In what way?

STROEBEL. Not personally, but from a wholly humanitarian or civic standpoint. You even told me that just because of your position as President of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, you regarded it as your duty to keep this matter out of the courts.

BEERMANN. Only for the common welfare.

STROEBEL. And out of consideration for public opinion. I had the impression that these considerations were of great importance to you.

BEERMANN. And still are. Do you think I change my views? I repeat to you, that I would consider this court trial a misfortune because it would be contrary to the established order of Society.

STROEBEL. Then we are agreed in our principles!

BEERMANN. You too?

STROEBEL. Absolutely.

BEERMANN. I thought that you had . . . this forenoon . . .

STROEBEL. And I was also mistaken because you didn't seem to remember. But at any rate we agree in our principles. [*They shake hands.*] Although that

does not accomplish anything still it is a great relief to me that we understand each other. I am coming now to the real purpose of my visit. [*He clears his throat.*] Herr Beermann, I must demand your word of honor that not a syllable of what I tell you will ever pass your lips.

BEERMANN. My sacred word of honor.

STROEBEL. These are official secrets, perhaps even State secrets, and a single careless word might have tremendous consequences.

BEERMANN. You can depend on me.

STROEBEL. Not even to your family.

BEERMANN. Not a breath.

STROEBEL. To tell you: Since you were at my office this morning there were most remarkable developments, quite unique in their way. But I have your word of honor — have I not?

BEERMANN. My sacred word of honor.

STROEBEL [*bends low and protects his mouth with his hand and whispers*]. That very night when Madame Hauteville's apartment was raided, without our knowledge a very distinguished person was hidden there.

BEERMANN. I can imagine.

STROEBEL [*loudly*]. You can't imagine it at all. [*Whispering.*] Our young heir, Prince Emil, was there himself.

BEERMANN [*surprised, slapping his thigh*]. Now what do you think of that!

STROEBEL [*loudly*]. You can understand that I am not telling you this as a mere bit of gossip, but certain important reasons compel me to. That which you mentioned before about the reasons of state was fulfilled. Fulfilled to the very letter. All possibilities of prosecuting this person at present have simply gone up in the air.

BEERMANN [*starting from his seat*]. Then everything is all right.

STROEBEL. There's nothing "all right" about it. Keep your seat, Herr Beermann. Of course our desire to prosecute has disappeared, but the lady in question is still at headquarters and we don't know how to get rid of her.

BEERMANN. Madame Hauteville? [*Stroebel nods.*] Just forget to lock the door and she'll vanish.

STROEBEL [*shaking his head*]. No, . . . for a great many reasons. Do you think I did not try hard to find a solution? First, if we openly permit her to escape, the whole city will know it to-morrow; the press will take it up and there will be a far greater scandal than the court proceedings would cause. No, sir, at least the letter of the law must be carried out. Madame Hauteville must give a bond. She will be set free and then she must escape. That's the only way we can protect ourselves from criticism. Do you understand me?

BEERMANN. You mean . . . about the bail?

STROEBEL. Yes, sir, the bail first of all. But if it were only the bail! Just think! She doesn't want to go at all.

BEERMANN. She does not want to . . . ?

STROEBEL. No. I gave her another hearing this afternoon and told her that we don't care to bother with her any more. "Listen," I said to her, "you are lucky. Give bail of Five Thousand Marks, and you will be free in ten minutes. There is a ten o'clock train for Brussels to-morrow morning." [*The bell in the hall rings.*] What do you suppose she said? She laughed. She knows very well why we are so humane, but she will not give a bond of five marks, even if by luck she had it. She says that she has already prepared for a trial. I talked to her politely, then rudely. She will not budge. She laughs and laughs and that's all. [*Knock at the door. Maid enters with a visiting card.*]

BEERMANN [*to the maid*]. What does it all mean to-

night, at this hour? This is not a hotel. [*Takes the card and reads.*] Freiherr Bodo von Schmettau, Herr auf Zirnberg?

STROEBEL. Do receive this gentleman, please.

BEERMANN. Now, while we are conferring?

STROEBEL. Yes, now, if you please.

BEERMANN [*to the maid*]. Ask the gentleman to come in. [*Betty exit.*]

STROEBEL. He is Adjutant to the young Prince. I told him I was going to see you, and you can realize how upset he is.

BEERMANN. If it affords you pleasure.

STROEBEL. It does. The entire responsibility rests on me and I at least must show that I have left nothing undone. [*Knock on the door.*]

BEERMANN. Come in. [*Schmettau enters.*]

SCHMETTAU. Good evening.

STROEBEL [*rising. Beermann rises also*]. May I introduce you gentlemen? Herr Beermann, the banker — Herr Baron Schmettau.

SCHMETTAU. We have already had a glimpse of each other to-day.

BEERMANN. Yes, I remember.

SCHMETTAU. You are the President of the Local Morality Club. Before we go further I must tell you that I do not at all agree with those views . . .

STROEBEL [*interrupting with anxiety*]. Herr Baron, may I call your attention to the fact that Herr Beermann, personally, is far above these narrow theories.

SCHMETTAU. I am glad to hear it. Besides as theories they're not so bad.

BEERMANN. As theories! That's what I say.

SCHMETTAU. Well, there you are!

STROEBEL. Herr Beermann is also the candidate of the local Conservative-Liberal Coalition.

SCHMETTAU. Then he is certainly no stickler for

high-flown notions. I should be right glad if we understood each other. And how far are you, gentlemen?

STROEBEL. In principles we are agreed.

BEERMANN. Absolutely.

SCHMETTAU. Then we shall have no difficulty in finding the right solution.

STROEBEL. I have taken Herr Beermann into our confidence.

SCHMETTAU. That was a very disagreeable mishap, was it not? Very bad. Whoever has any patriotism can realize it.

BEERMANN. Herr Baron was also . . .

SCHMETTAU. Locked in the closet.

STROEBEL. Permit me to revert to the facts. I was just telling Herr Beermann that this Hauteville woman refuses to leave. She boasts that she has not the bail and even if she had it, she would not pay it.

SCHMETTAU. Confound her! She controls the situation.

STROEBEL. Now we come to the most difficult part of it. She says that if she is compelled to leave the city and is deprived of her livelihood, she wants proper damages for it. Of course I told the woman that this, to say the least, was an extortionate demand. Well then, she says, we will have a trial in court.

BEERMANN. The fox! She knows well that's out of the question.

SCHMETTAU. I am very grateful to you for these sentiments.

STROEBEL. I asked what she considered proper damages. "Ten thousand marks," she says. I almost lost my senses. With the necessary bail that would make Fifteen thousand marks.

SCHMETTAU. In the end perhaps that is not so gigantic.

STROEBEL. Who is going to pay it?

SCHMETTAU. Not we, of course. Our state is a poor paymaster.

STROEBEL. Here is a fine mess, which I cannot solve — at least not I. Herr Beermann, you said yourself that your Society for the Suppression of Vice is vitally interested in the undisturbed maintenance of the popular belief in morality. For the members of your Society, it ought to be quite easy to collect that sum. I know of no other way.

BEERMANN [*with folded hands he stands in a pensive mood*]. The Executive Committee is expecting its chairman. And I know of a professor who alone ought to pay an extra thousand for a letter he wrote. [*To the others.*] Gentlemen, briefly speaking, I will do it. On behalf of the society, I pledge this sum.

SCHMETTAU. Herr von Beermann, I can only say that you have acted honorably. The House of Emil the Benevolent knows on whom to confer an order. [*He offers his hand.*]

BEERMANN. But let me assure you, Herr Baron, I did not do it expecting a reward.

CURTAIN

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